CHITRA KATHA

pecial Issue No. 1

DASHA AVATAR

THE TEN INCARNATIONS OF VISHNU



यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥

The Avatar concept is the very cornerstone of Hindu theology. According to it, the Supreme Power manifests itself in animal or human forms on earth, with the divine mission of cleansing it of the periodically increasing evil.

The Avatar concept is closely related to the measurement of time in Hindu theology which has its basis on one working day of Brahma.

According to the Bhagwat Purana, Brahma, the creator, is the causal effect of the predetermined periodic creation and dissolution of the universe.

Each creation or ***Kalpa*** is equal to one day and each dissolution or ***Pralaya*** is equal to one night in the life of Brahma. A Kalpa and a Pralaya last for 4,320 million human years each.

Every Kalpa has 1000 cycles of 4 ***Yugas*** (ages). Each cycle of 4 Yugas is completed in 4,320,000 human years. The Yugas are called Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. The Satya Yuga (the age when virtue prevails and evil is unknown) lasts for 1,728,000 human years; the Treta Yuga (where virtue falls short by a fourth of the total amount) for 1,296,000 years; the Dwapara Yuga (where virtue has diminished by half) for 864,000 years; and the Kali Yuga (where but a fourth of virtue remains) for only 432,000 years. Thus a Kalpa consists of 4,000 Yugas.

Each Kalpa is divided into 14 ***Manvantaras*** or periods, each lasting for 71 cycles of the four Yugas, and the title ***Manu*** is given to the one who presides over each Manvantara. Thus in every Kalpa 14 Manus appear in succession, each presiding over a Manvantara.

The Avatars which are considered most significant are ten in number and they form the "Dashavatar". These ten start with the form of a lowly fish and work up to the noble man, cast in the image of God. The fanciful find a parallel to Darwin's theory of evolution in the progression of these Avatars.

The Avatars enable the common folk to speak of or listen to stories of divine doings which is a simple way of proceeding towards Godhead; particularly in our Kali Yuga with its 'sick hurry and divided aims'.

Published by H.G. Mirchandani for India Book House Education Trust, Rusi Mansion, 29, Nathalal Parekh Marg, Bombay 400 039 and printed by Deepak G. Mirchandani at IBH Printers, Marol Naka, Mathuradas Vissanji Road, Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059.
Editor: Anant Pai
Script: Kamala Chandrakant Illustrations: Pratap Mulick

MATSYA AVATAR





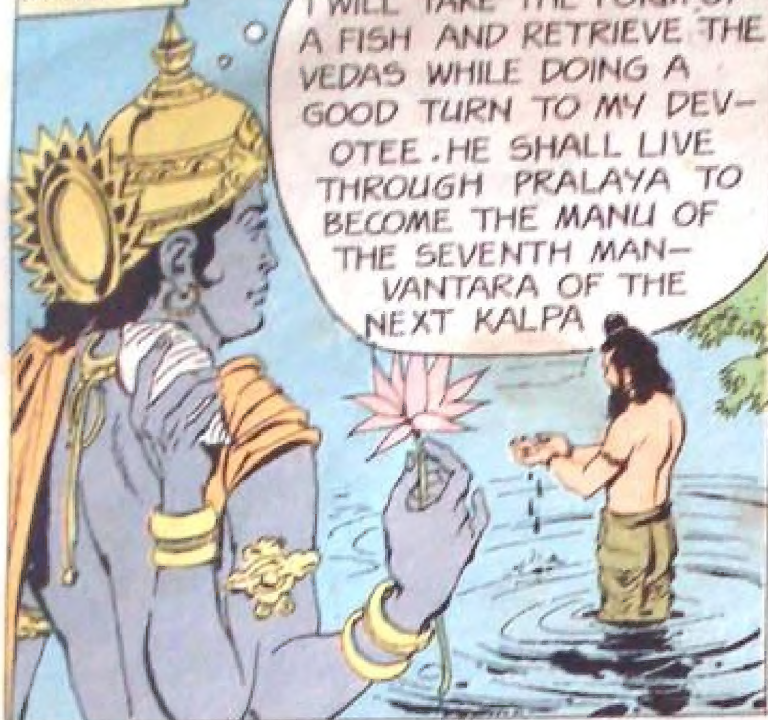
EXHAUSTED, BRAHMA STRETCHED OUT AND YAWNED. HIS DAY'S WORK WAS OVER. THE END OF THE CURRENT KALPA WAS IMMINENT. AS HIS EYE-LIDS DROOPED WITH SLEEP, WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE THE VEDAS SLIPPED OUT OF HIS MOUTH.

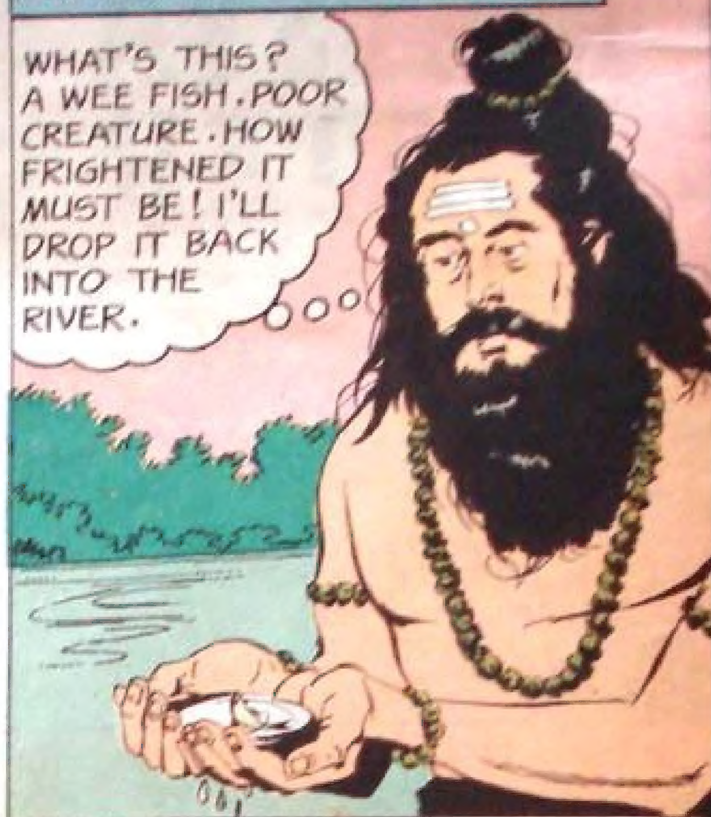
THE ASURA, HAYAGRIVA, WAS ALERT.



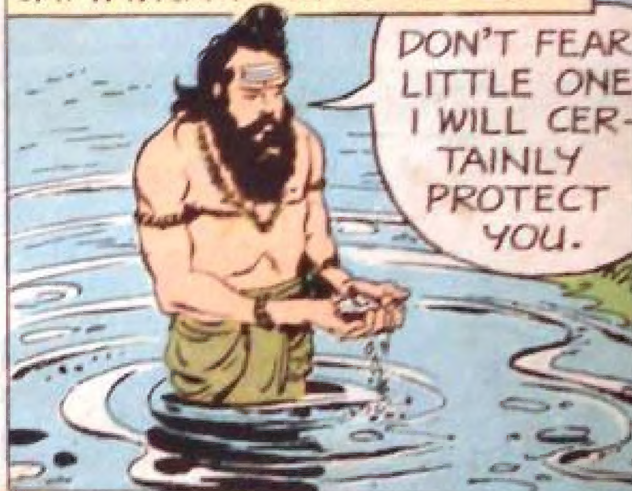
BUT VISHNU, THE PRESERVER, CAUGHT HAYAGRIVA IN THE ACT.




AS HE WONDERED WHAT TO DO, HE SAW THE ROYAL SAGE, SATYAVRATA, A STAUNCH DEVOTEE, OFFERING WATER TO THE MANES.
I WILL TAKE THE FORM OF A FISH AND RETRIEVE THE VEDAS WHILE DOING A GOOD TURN TO MY DEVOTEE. HE SHALL LIVE THROUGH PRALAYA TO BECOME THE MANU OF THE SEVENTH MANVANTARA OF THE NEXT KALPA


AS SATYAVRATA, SCOOPED UP THE NEXT HANDFUL OF WATER—
WHAT'S THIS? A WEE FISH. POOR CREATURE. HOW FRIGHTENED IT MUST BE! I'LL DROP IT BACK INTO THE RIVER.


HE WAS ABOUT TO DO SO WHEN —
O KIND KING, DO NOT THROW ME BACK INTO THE WATER. HELPLESS AS I AM, OTHER CREATURES OF THE RIVER WILL SOON EAT ME UP.


SATYAVRATA WAS MOVED.
DON'T FEAR LITTLE ONE I WILL CERTAINLY PROTECT YOU.

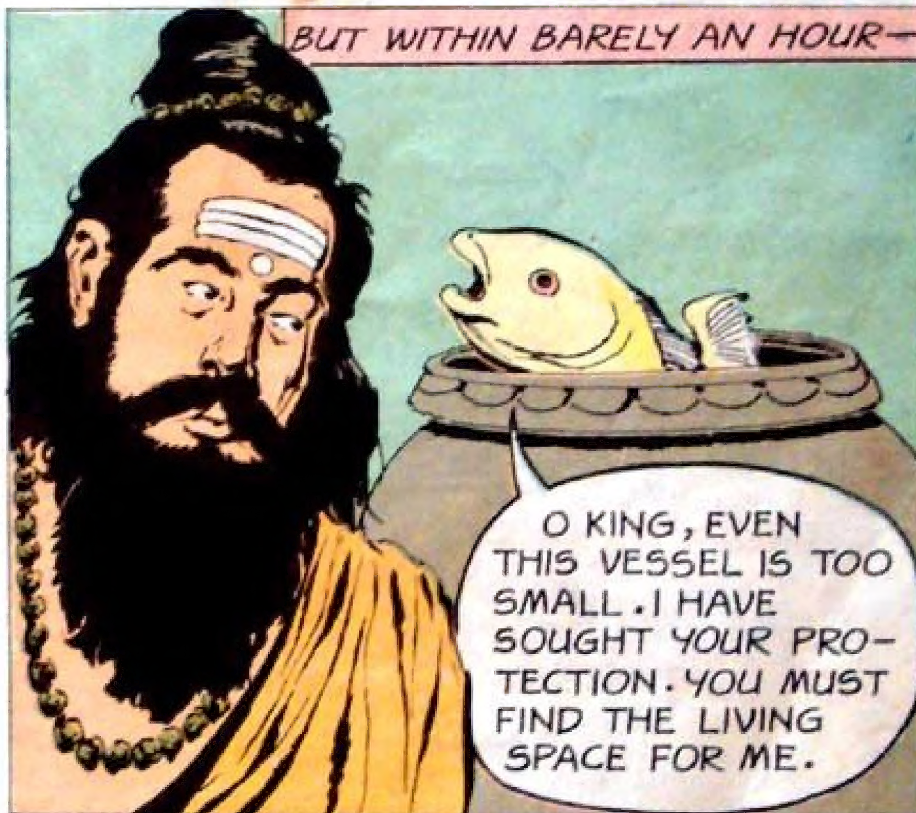

HE PUT THE FISH INTO HIS KAMANDALU...


...AND TOOK IT TO HIS HERMITAGE.


THAT NIGHT, HOWEVER, THE FISH GREW AND GREW TILL IT FILLED THE WHOLE KAMANDALU.


IN THE MORNING WHEN SATYAVRATA WENT TO SEE IF IT WAS ALL RIGHT—
O KING, THIS KAMANDALU IS TOO SMALL. PLEASE FIND A MORE SPACIOUS VESSEL FOR ME.


REMOVING IT FROM THE KAMANDALU, SATYAVRATA PLACED IT IN A LARGE VESSEL OF WATER.


BUT WITHIN BARELY AN HOUR—
O KING, EVEN THIS VESSEL IS TOO SMALL. I HAVE SOUGHT YOUR PROTECTION. YOU MUST FIND THE LIVING SPACE FOR ME.


SATYAVRATA PUSHED THE VESSEL TO A LARGE POND NEAR THE HERMITAGE AND TIPPED THE FISH INTO IT.


BUT IN NO TIME, THE FISH GREW TILL IT FILLED THE WHOLE POND.
O KING, LEAD ME TO A LAKE—A DEEP, LARGE ONE. I WILL DIE IF I REMAIN HERE.



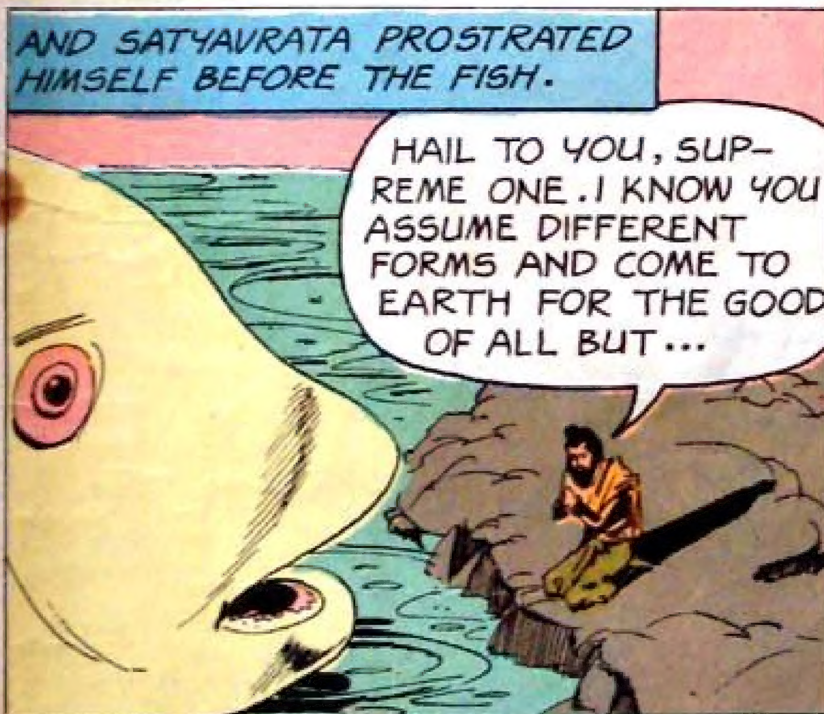


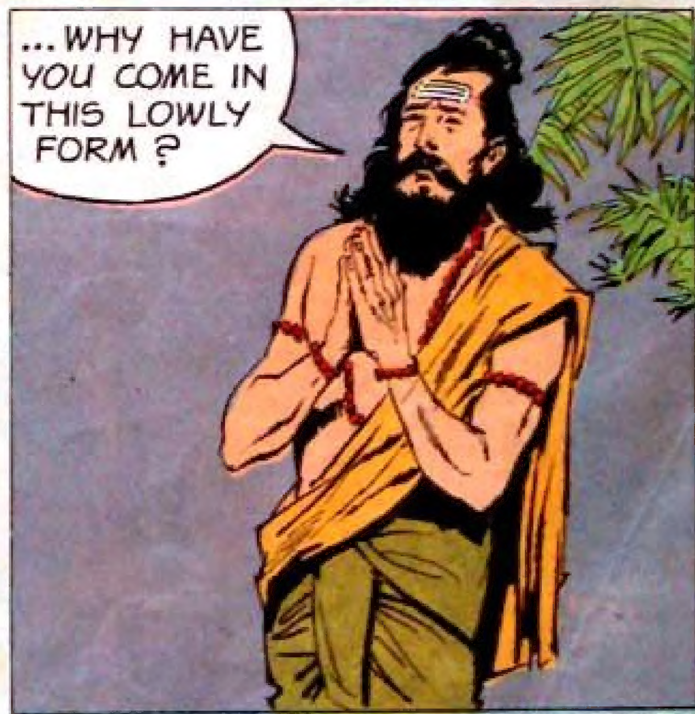
SATYAVRATA NOW BECAME SUSPICIOUS.

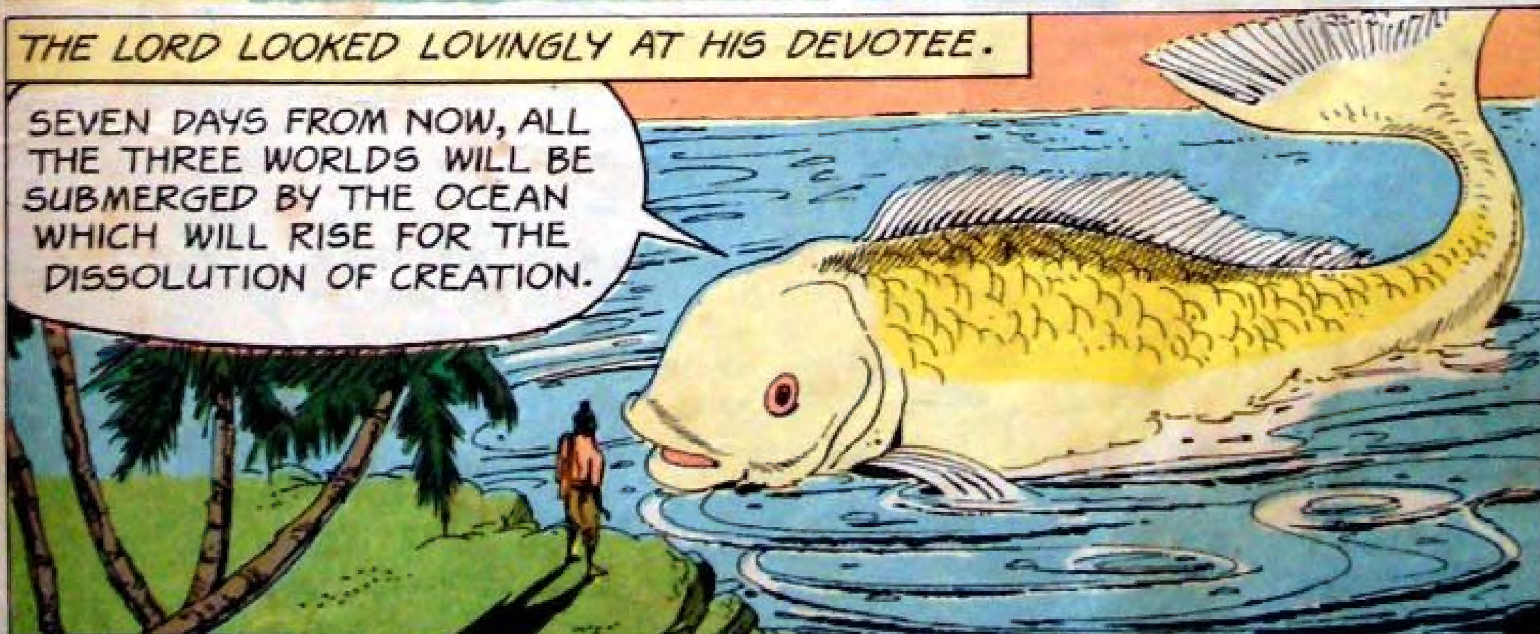
WHO ARE YOU? I HAVE NEITHER SEE NOR HEARD OF A WON DERFUL CREATURE LIK YOU. IN ONE DAY YOU HAVE GROWN BIG ENOUGH TO COVER THE LARGEST OF LAKES.











*ANOTHER NAME OF VISHNU.



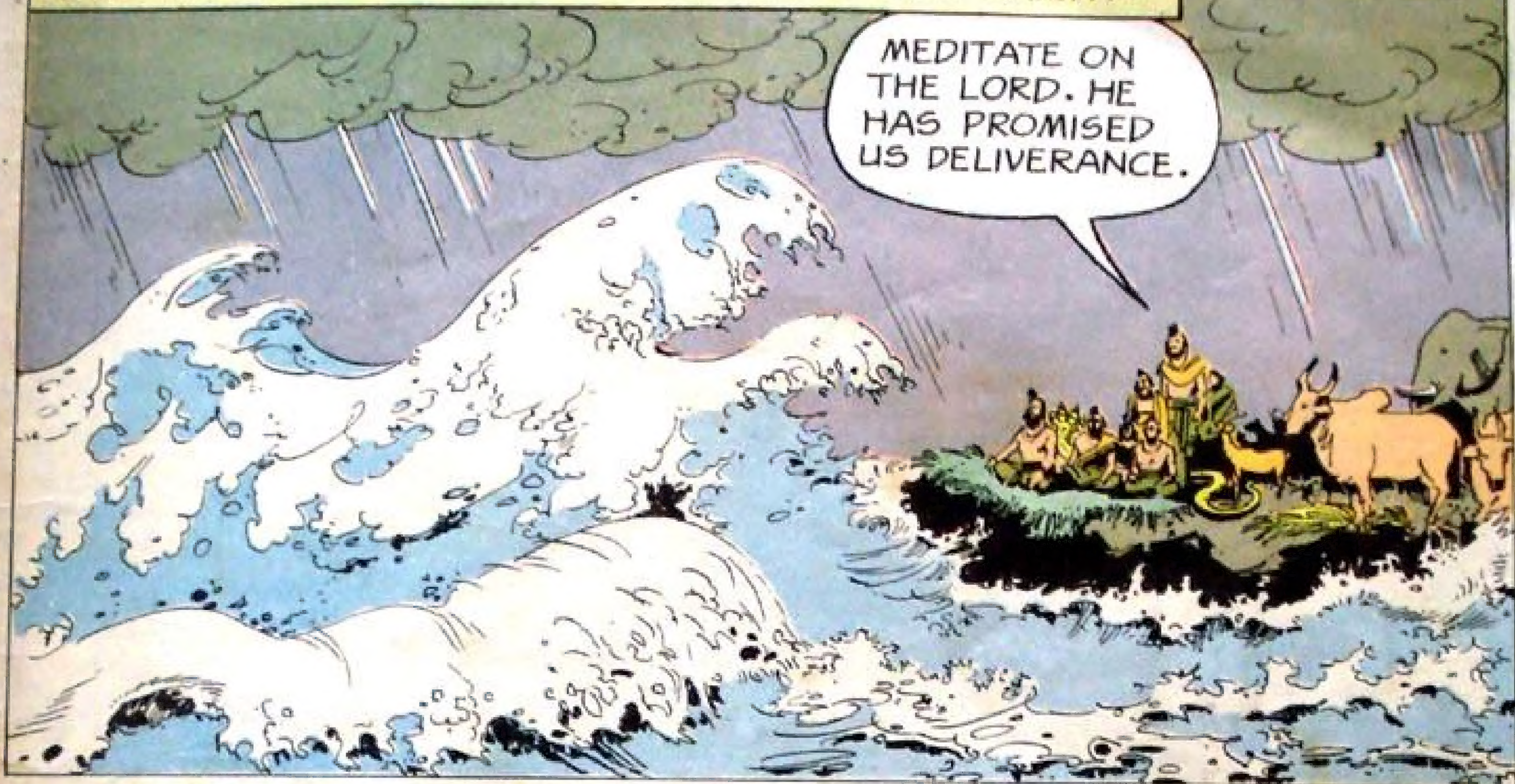
MEANWHILE, YOU MUST COLLECT ALL THE HERBS AND SEEDS AND ANIMALS YOU WANT FOR THE NEXT KALPA. THEN, ALONG WITH THE SAPTA RISHIS,* GET INTO THE BOAT AND AWAIT ME. DON'T FORGET TO BRING VASUKI, KING OF THE SERPENTS, WITH YOU.



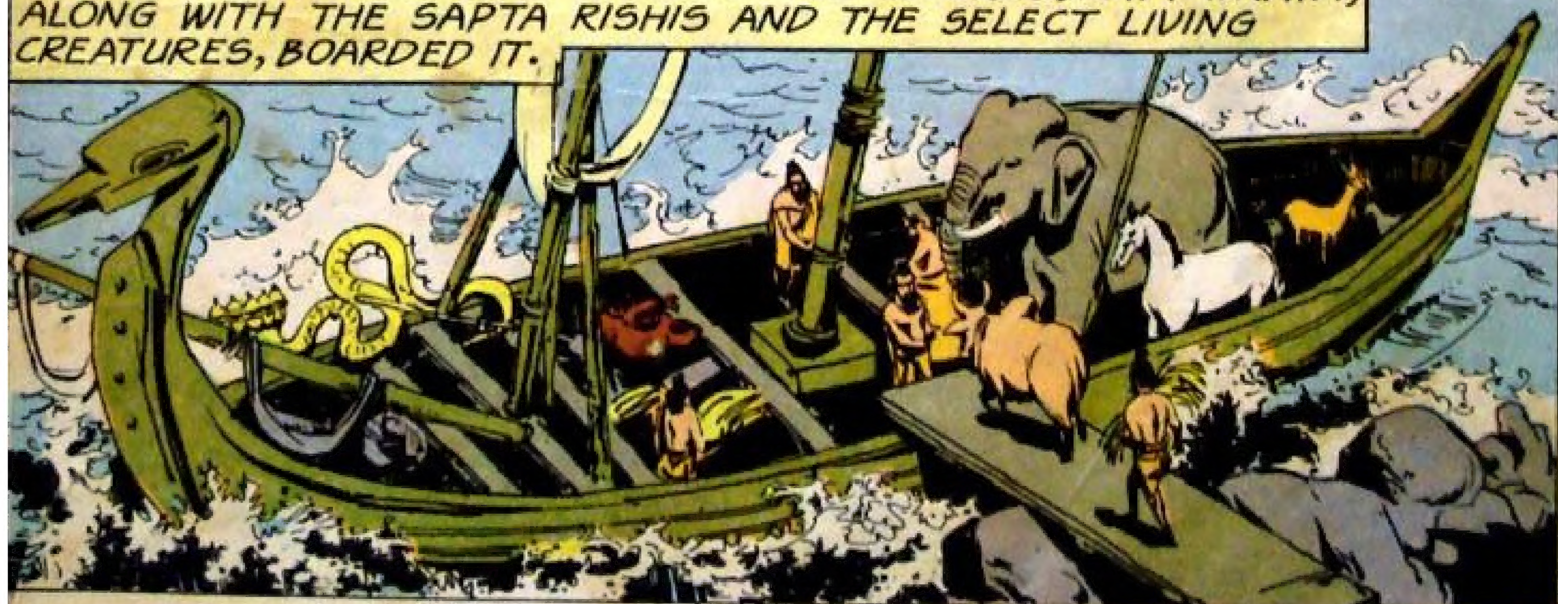




* SEVEN SAGES


SEVEN DAYS LATER, HUGE CLOUDS GATHERED OVER THE OCEAN. THE RAIN POURED DOWN IN TORRENTS. THE OCEAN BEGAN RISING AND HUGE TIDAL WAVES BEGAN SWALLOWING THE EARTH.
MEDITATE ON THE LORD. HE HAS PROMISED US DELIVERANCE.

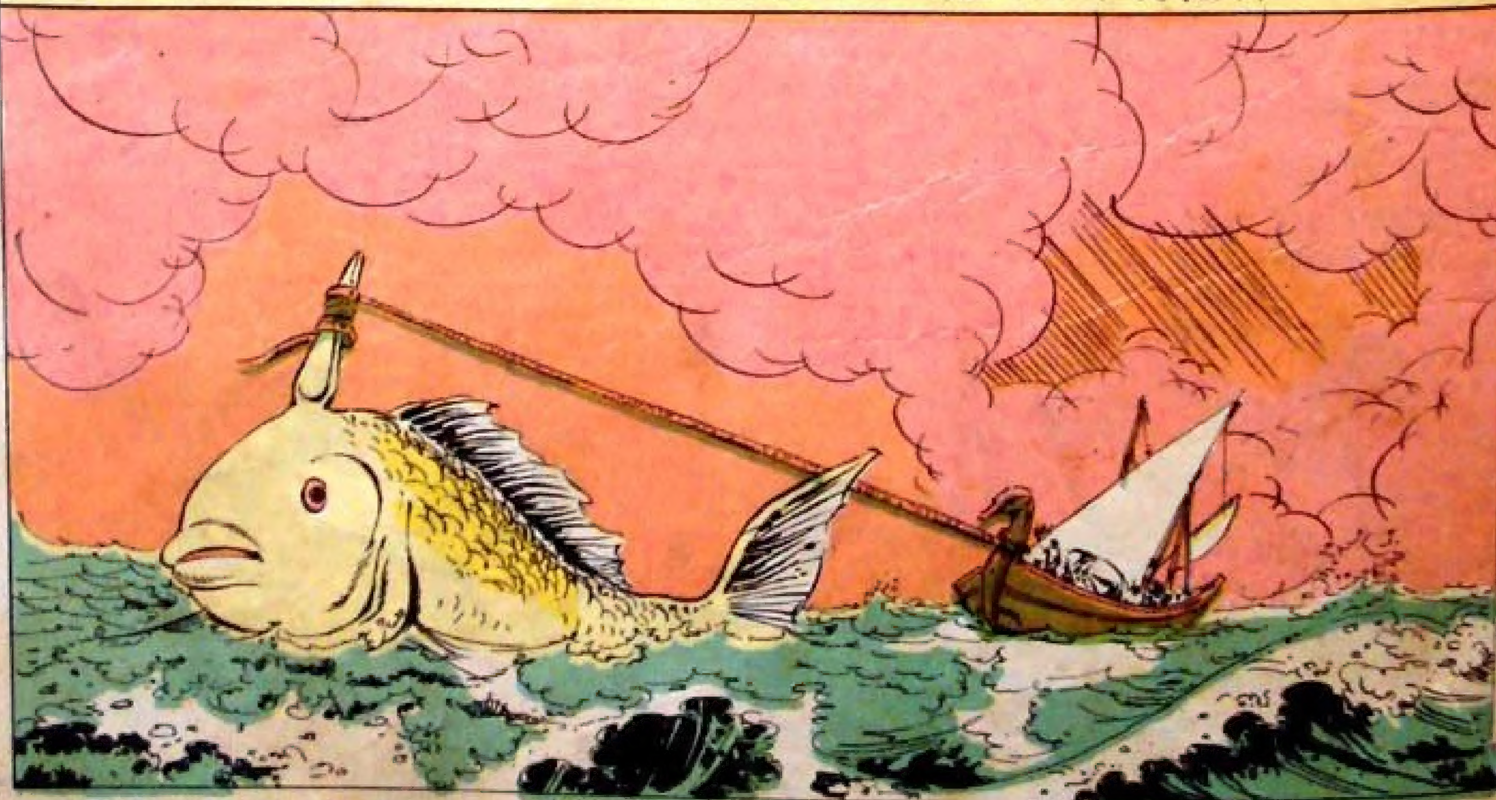

AS ADVISED BY THE FISH, SATYAVRATA AND THE SAPTA RISHIS WAITED ON THE SHORES. SUDDENLY —
AH! THERE COMES THE BOAT AS THE LORD HAD PROMISED. BE PREPARED TO GO ON BOARD.


AS SOON AS THE VESSEL TOUCHED THE SHORES, SATYAVRATA, ALONG WITH THE SAPTA RISHIS AND THE SELECT LIVING CREATURES, BOARDED IT.

AS THEIR BOAT WAS TOSSED ABOUT BY THE TURBULENT OCEAN, THEY SUDDENLY SAW THE FISH APPROACH THEM. IT HAD A HORN NOW AND WAS GOLDEN IN COLOUR. IT LIT UP THE DARKENING SKIES, REASSURING THE INMATES OF THE BOAT.

FASTEN THE VESSEL TO MY HORN, USING VASUKI AS A ROPE. DO NOT FEAR. NOT ONE OF YOU SHALL COME TO ANY HARM.

WHILE THEY SAILED ON THAT VAST EXPANSE OF WATER, THROUGHOUT THAT NIGHT* OF BRAHMA, VISHNU TAUGHT SATYAVRATA AND THE SAPTA RISHIS THE HIGHEST FORM OF TRUTH WHICH HAS COME DOWN TO US AS A COLLECTION OF PURANIC LORE, CALLED THE MATSYA PURANA. THUS DID VISHNU SAVE TRUE DEVOTEES FROM DISSOLUTION SO THAT THEY MIGHT CARRY DIVINE KNOWLEDGE TO THE NEXT KALPA.



* EQUIVALENT TO A DAY OF BRAHMA.

KURMA AVATAR

IT WAS THE SIXTH MANVANTARA OF THE PRESENT KALPA. INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, AND HIS SUBJECTS WERE IN TROUBLE. CONSULTATIONS AMONG THEMSELVES DID NOT PROVIDE ANY SOLUTION. SO THEY DECIDED TO GO TO BRAHMA THE CREATOR, WHO LIVED ON MOUNT MERU.






BRAHMA MEDITATED FOR A WHILE. THEN—
LET US TAKE REFUGE IN LORD VISHNU. HE ALWAYS HELPS THOSE WHO PLACE FAITH IN HIM. BESIDES, IT IS HE WHO PRESERVES THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE.


SO THEY WENT TO THE ABODE OF VISHNU, THE PRESERVER.
O OMNISCIENT ONE, YOU KNOW WHY WE, THE GUARDIANS OF THE WORLD, HAVE COME. WE SURRENDER OURSELVES TO YOU. SHOW US A WAY OUT OF OUR PLIGHT.

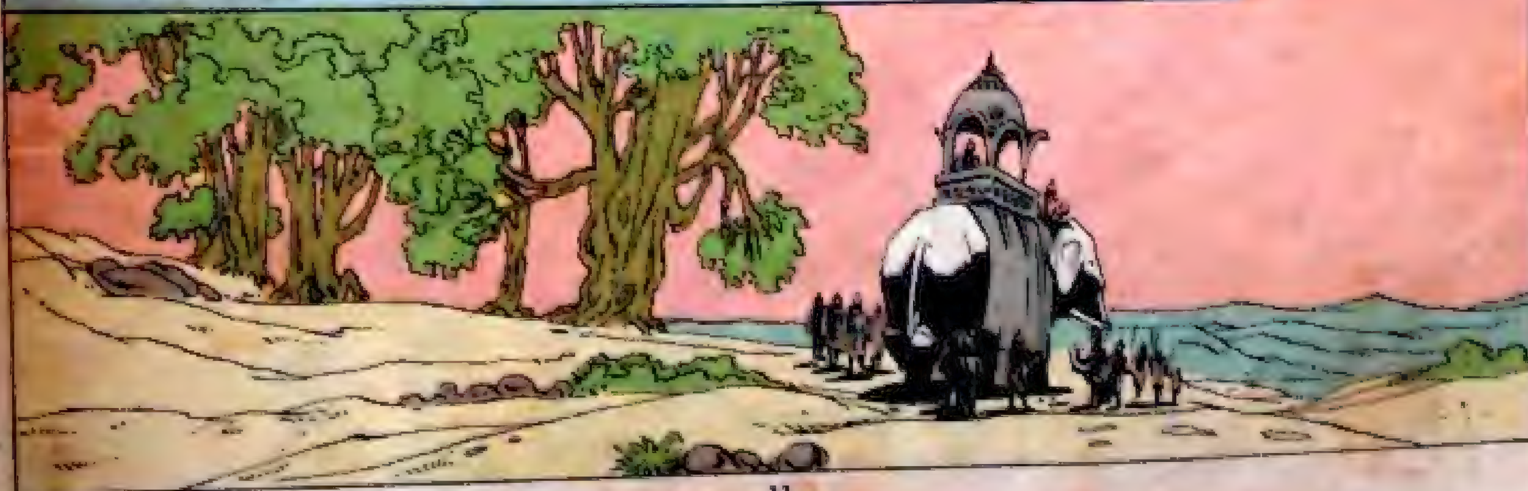

LORD VISHNU SPOKE IN HIS DEEP, RESONANT VOICE.
YOU WILL HAVE TO STRIVE HARD AND OBTAIN THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY OUT FOR YOU.


HOW SHOULD WE OBTAIN THE NECTAR, O LORD?
YOU MUST CAST ALL KINDS OF PLANTS, HERBS, GRASSES AND CREEPERS INTO THE OCEAN OF MILK. THEN CHURN THE OCEAN USING MOUNT MANDARA AS A CHURN-DASHER AND VASUKI, KING OF THE SERPENTS, AS THE ROPE FOR TURNING IT.


BUT LORD, HOW ARE WE TO SHIFT MOUNT MANDARA?
MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR COUSINS AND ENEMIES, THE ASURAS AND USE THEM TO ACHIEVE YOUR END.


YOU MUST BE CAREFUL, HOWEVER, NOT TO COVET ANY OF THE THINGS THAT COME OUT OF THE OCEAN AND NOT TO GIVE VENT TO ANGER EVEN IF THOSE THINGS ARE FORCIBLY TAKEN BY THE ASURAS.
B-B-BUT THE NECTAR? IF THEY SNATCH THE NECTAR?


I PROMISE YOU THAT YOUR AGGRESSIVE COUSINS WILL NOT ENJOY ANY PART OF THE NECTAR, FOR ALL THEIR TOIL.


BRAHMA RETURNED TO HIS OWN ABODE WHILE INDRA AND THE DEVAS SET OUT FOR THE COURT OF BALI, KING OF THE ASURAS.

WHEN BALI AND HIS ASURA FOLLOWING SAW THEIR ENEMIES APPROACH—

O KING, LET US CAPTURE THE ROGUES. THEY ARE UNARMED AND HELPLESS.

NO. WAIT. PERHAPS THE DEVAS COME WITH A PROPOSAL THAT MIGHT BE WORTH OUR WHILE.

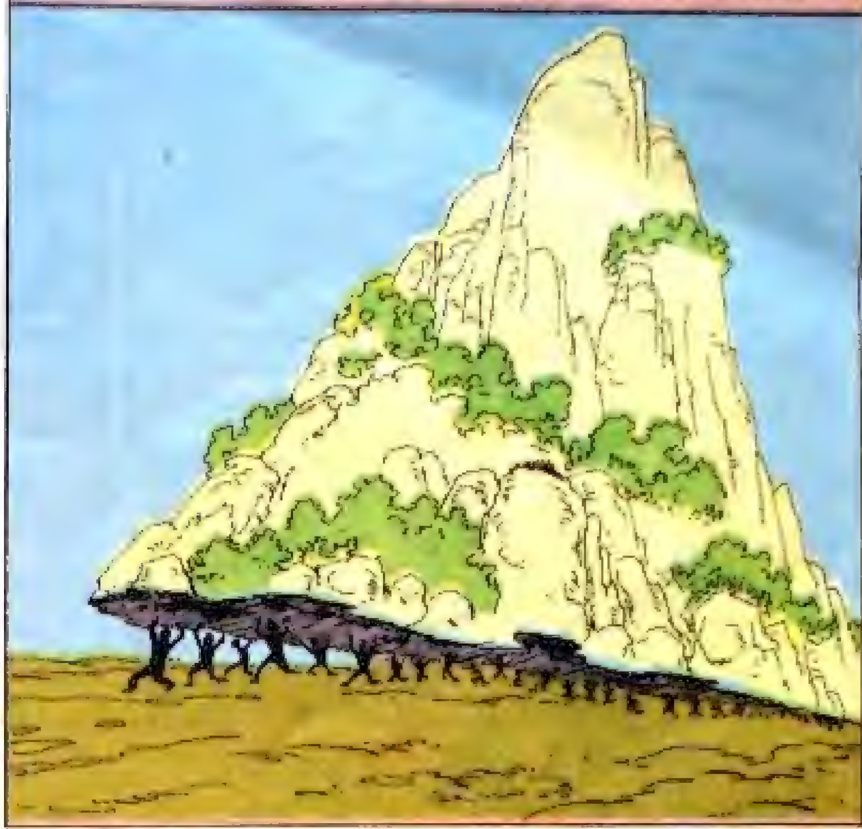
BALI RECEIVED INDRA AND THE DEVAS WITH RESPECT AND GAVE THEM SEATS OF HONOUR. INDRA TOLD HIM WHY THEY HAD COME.

...AND SO, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL OF US, I REQUEST YOU TO FORGET OUR FEUD AND WORK WITH US IN THE VENTURE.

BALI, AS WELL AS HIS CHIEFS, FAVOURED THE PROPOSAL AND PEACE WAS DECLARED BETWEEN THE ASURAS AND THE DEVAS.

LET US NOT WASTE ANY TIME, INDRA. RALLY YOUR FORCES WHILE I RALLY MINE AND LET US BEGIN THE WORK IMMEDIATELY.


A LITTLE LATER, ALONG WITH THEIR HORDES, BALI AND INDRA BEGAN THE TASK OF UPROOTING MOUNT MANDARA...


...AND TAKING IT TO THE SEASHORE.


BUT WHEN THEY HAD BARELY COVERED HALF THE DISTANCE —
OO-OH! I CANNOT CARRY IT ANY FARTHER.
MY ARMS HAVE ALMOST FALLEN OUT OF THEIR SOCKETS.
WHY DID WE EVER AGREE TO SUCH AN INSANE PROPOSAL?


BEWARE!
ALAS! WHAT A FATE!
MOVE OUT OF THE WAY!





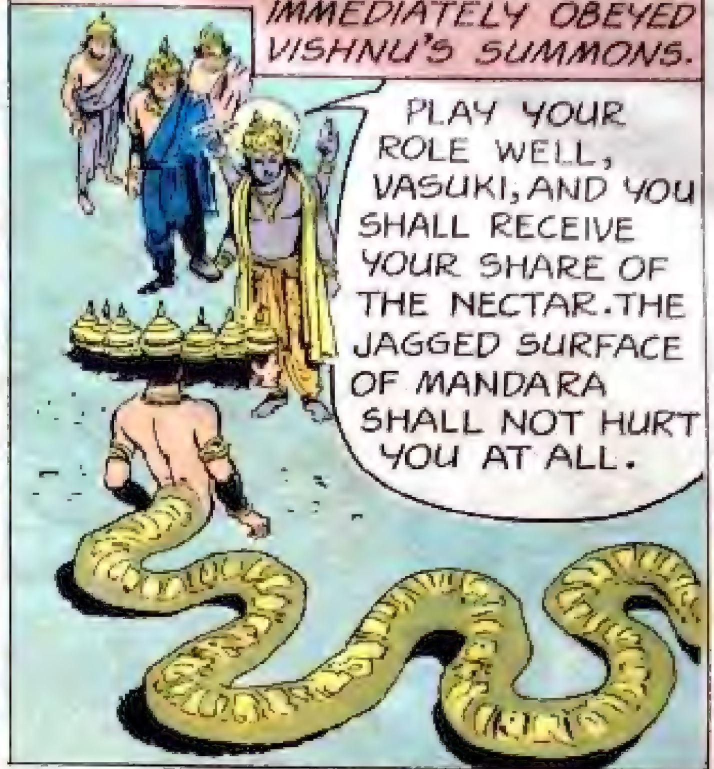




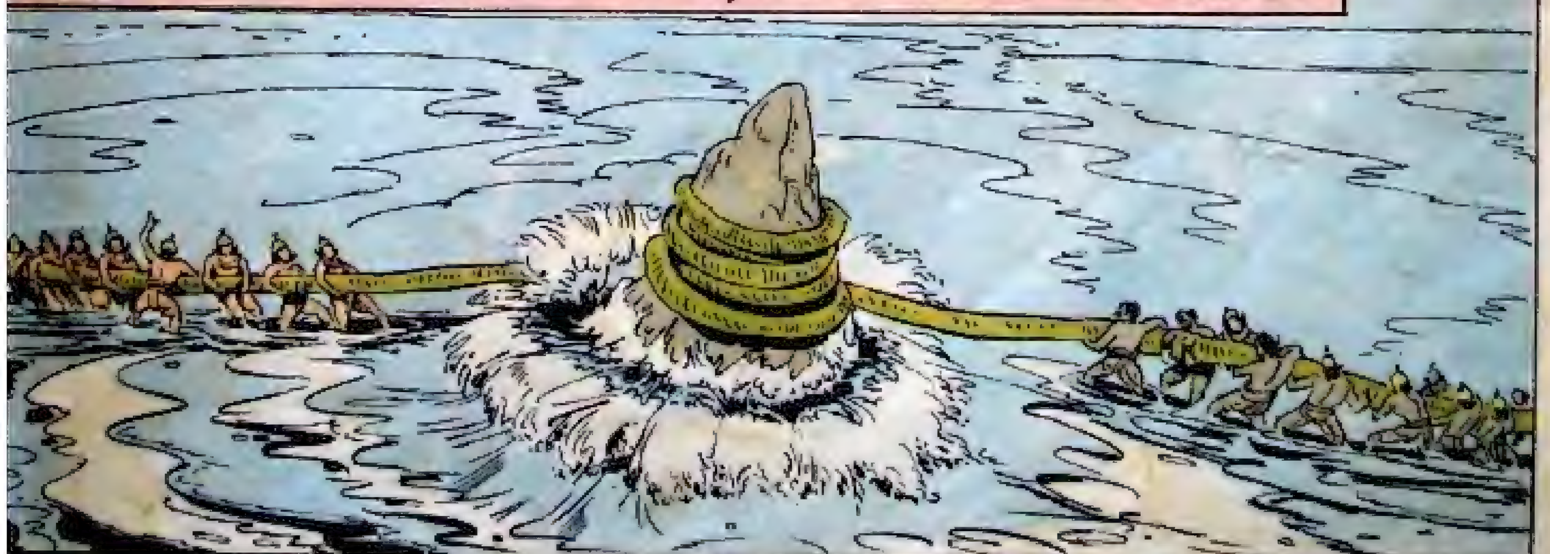


* VISHNU'S MOUNT.


AFTER THE MOUNTAIN WAS SAFELY DEPOSITED ON THE SEASHORE, VISHNU TURNED TO GARUDA.
THERE COMES VASUKI, BUT HE IS AFRAID TO COME CLOSER BE-CAUSE YOU ARE HIS NATURAL ENEMY. WITHDRAW, DEAR GARUDA, AND MAKE ROOM FOR THE KING OF SERPENTS.


WHEN HE SAW THAT GARUDA HAD FLOWN AWAY, VASUKI IMMEDIATELY OBEYED VISHNU'S SUMMONS.
PLAY YOUR ROLE WELL, VASUKI, AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE YOUR SHARE OF THE NECTAR. THE JAGGED SURFACE OF MANDARA SHALL NOT HURT YOU AT ALL.


REASSURED, VASUKI ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE WOUND ROUND MANDARA.
THERE! NOW WE ARE READY. COME, FRIENDS AND BROTHERS, LET US CHURN WITH ALL OUR MIGHT FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF ALL OF US.


FULL OF JOYOUS ANTICIPATION, THEY BEGAN CHURNING.

BUT THEIR JOY SOON TURNED INTO DESPAIR. THE HEAVY MOUNT MANDARA, WHICH HAD NOTHING TO SUPPORT IT, SANK INTO THE OCEAN.

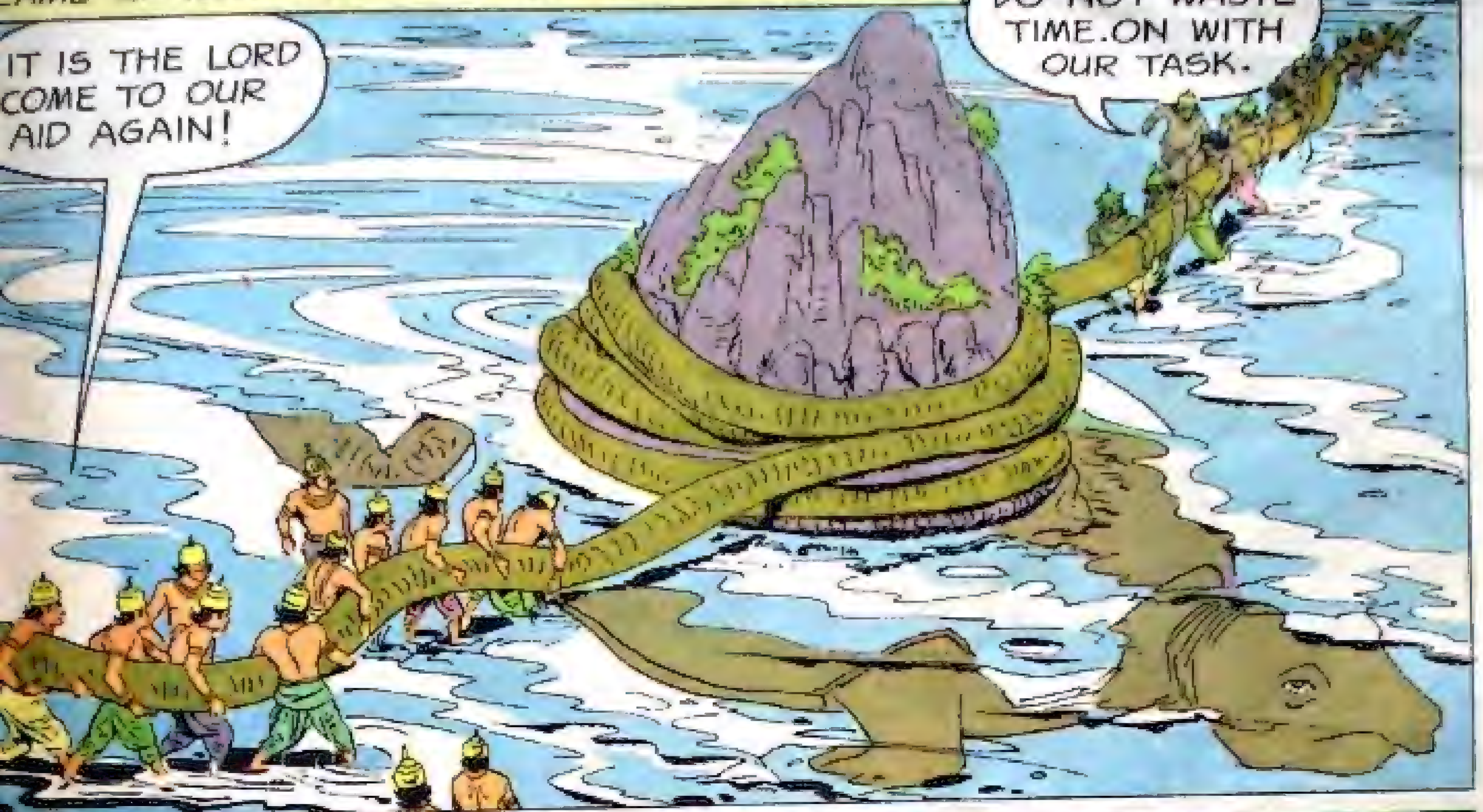
ALAS! IS THE NECTAR NEVER TO BE OURS?

WHAT IS TO BE DONE NOW?

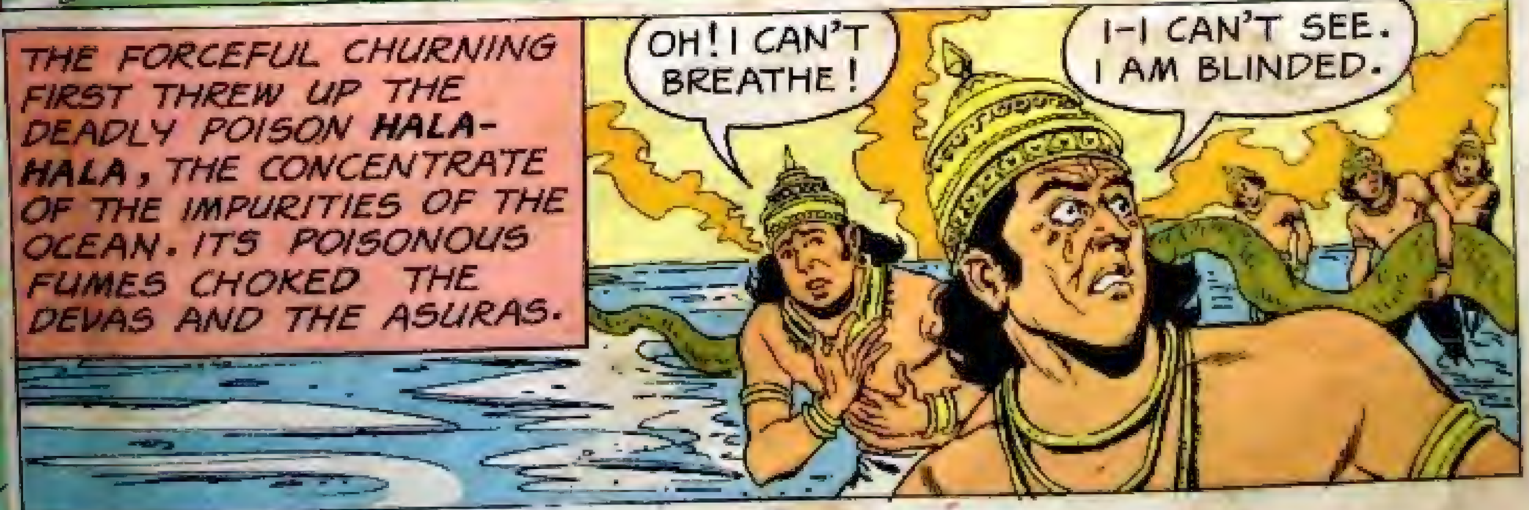
IF WE, THE MIGHTIEST OF DEVAS AND ASURAS, COULD NOT HOLD UP MANDARA, WHO CAN?



...HE PLUNGED INTO THE OCEAN...


...AND TO THE AMAZED DELIGHT OF THE DEVAS AND ASURAS, CAME UP WITH THE MOUNTAIN ON HIS BACK.
IT IS THE LORD COME TO OUR AID AGAIN!
DO NOT WASTE TIME. ON WITH OUR TASK.


THEY CHURNED AND CHURNED, BUT IN VAIN.
I CANNOT CONTINUE ANY LONGER. MY LIMBS ARE NUMB!
I WILL HAVE TO DO THE CHURNING TOO.


THE FORCEFUL CHURNING FIRST THREW UP THE DEADLY POISON HALA-HALA, THE CONCENTRATE OF THE IMPURITIES OF THE OCEAN. ITS POISONOUS FUMES CHOKED THE DEVAS AND THE ASURAS.
OH! I CAN'T BREATHE!
I-I CAN'T SEE. I AM BLINDED.

FRIGHTENED OUT OF THEIR WITS, THEY RAN TO LORD SHIVA AT KAILASA.

GO IN PEACE. DO NOT FEAR. I SHALL TAKE IN THE POISON.

COLLECTING THE POISON INTO HIS PALM ...

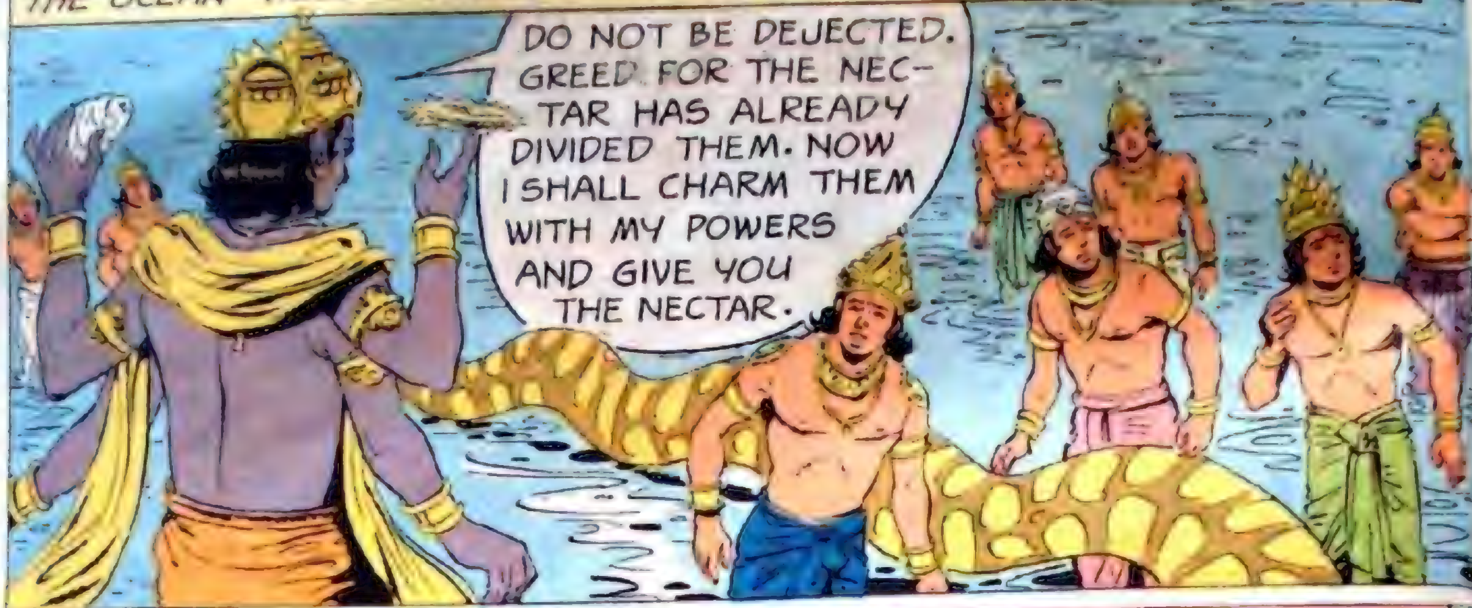
... SHIVA SWALLOWED IT.

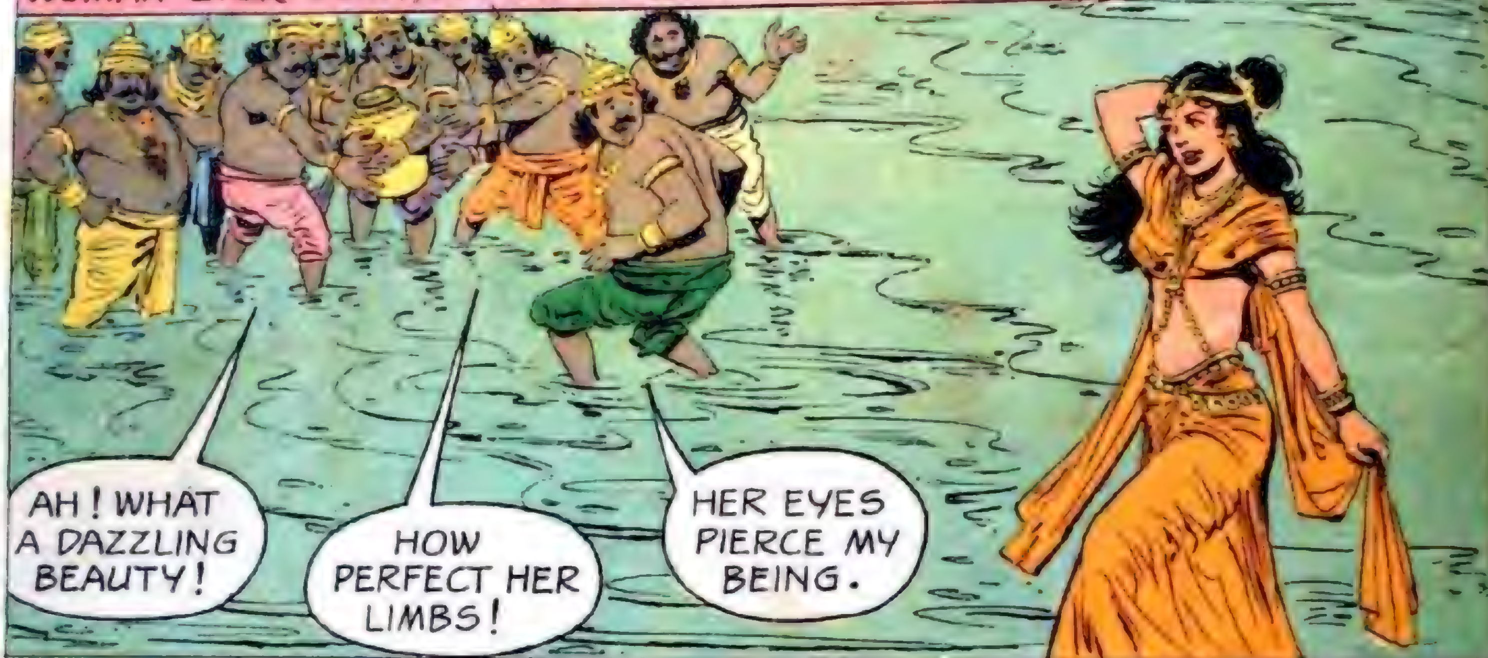
AS SOON AS THE POISON WAS REMOVED, THE DEVAS AND ASURAS WERE ABLE TO CHURN THE OCEAN ONCE AGAIN.

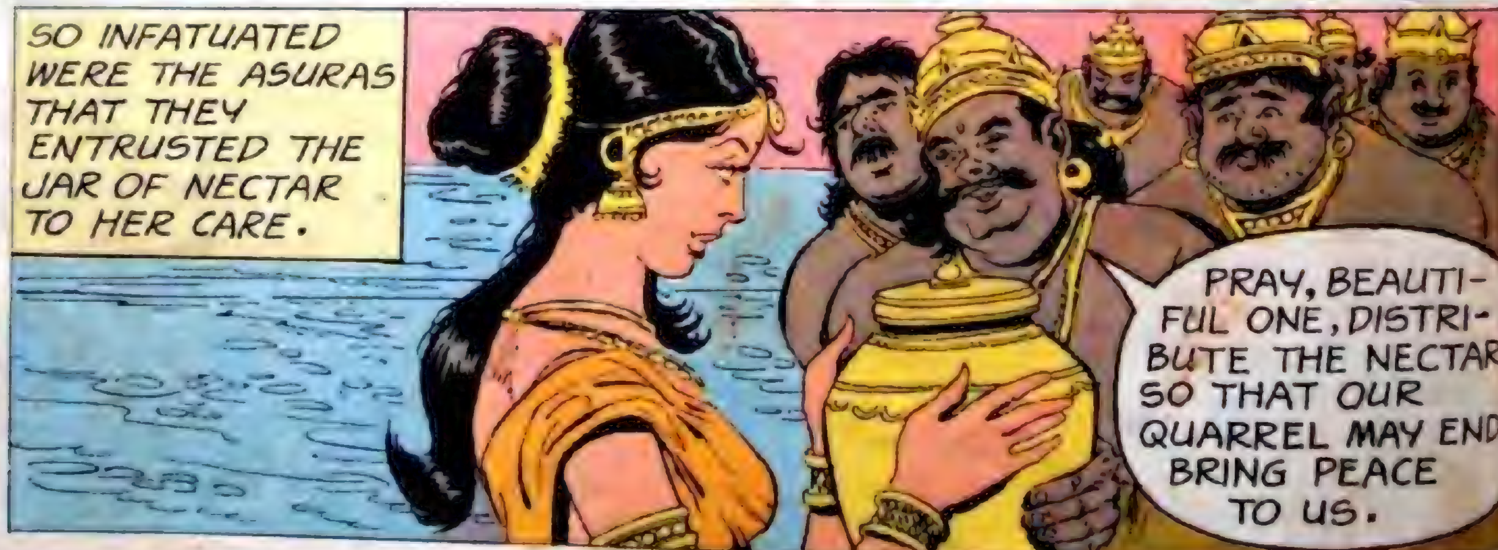

AS THEY CONTINUED CHURNING, MANY PRECIOUS THINGS ROSE TO THE SURFACE, BUT NOT THE NECTAR. THEN SUDDENLY A BEING EMERGED —
WHO COULD HE BE!


IT WAS DHANWANTARI WITH THE JAR OF THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY —
THE JAR! IT CONTAINS THE NECTAR.
THE NECTAR.
SNATCH IT.
DON'T LET THE DEVAS GET AT IT.

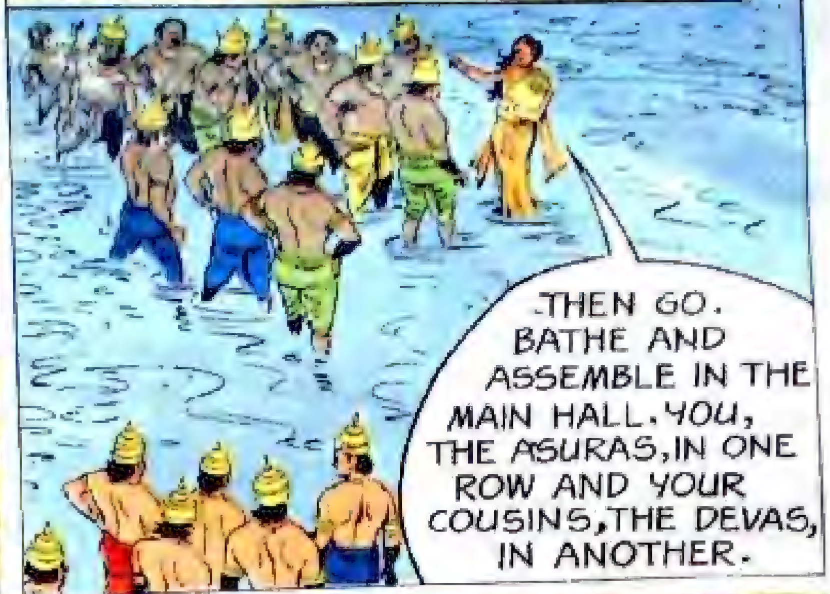

FORGETTING THEIR TRUCE, THE ASURAS SNATCHED THE PRECIOUS JAR ALL FOR THEMSELVES.
I SHALL HAVE IT FIRST.
NO, I SHALL.
NO. NOT YOU; I WILL.
GIVE IT TO ME. I AM YOUR CHIEF.


THE DEVAS WATCHED THE ASURAS IN DISMAY. BUT REMEMBERING VISHNU'S COMMAND THAT THEY SHOULD NOT QUARREL OVER WHAT THE OCEAN YIELDED, THEY MADE NO MOVE. VISHNU WAS PLEASED.
DO NOT BE DEJECTED. GREED FOR THE NECTAR HAS ALREADY DIVIDED THEM. NOW I SHALL CHARM THEM WITH MY POWERS AND GIVE YOU THE NECTAR.

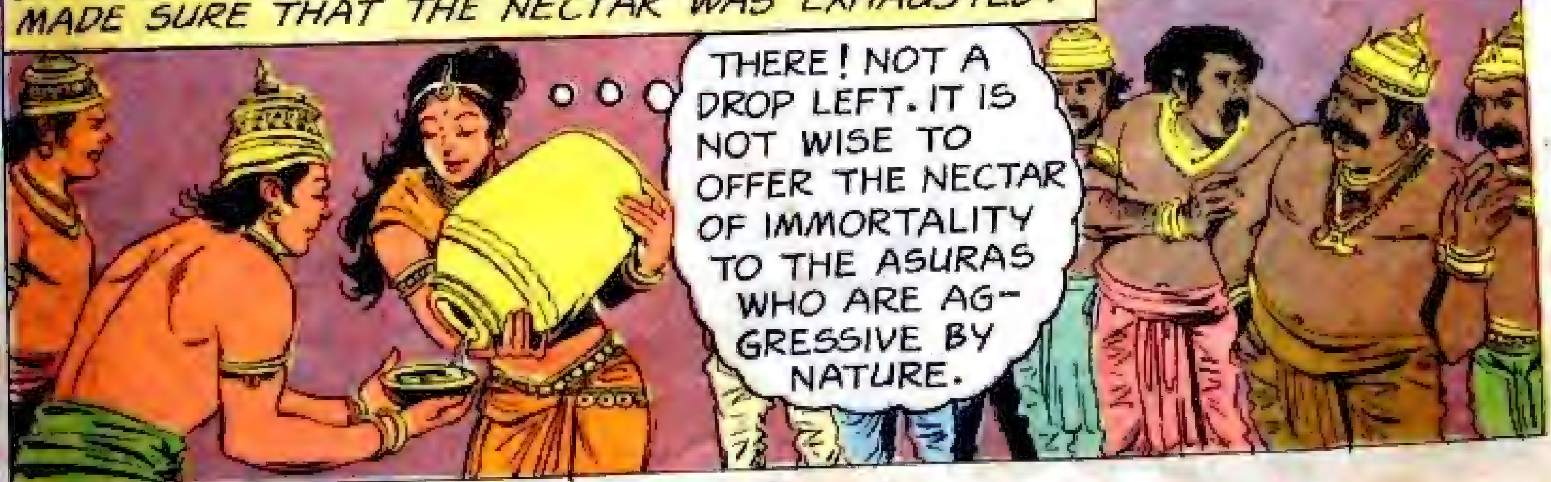

THEN VISHNU TOOK ON THE FORM OF MOHINI, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN EVER SEEN, AND APPROACHED THE ASURAS.
AH! WHAT A DAZZLING BEAUTY!
HOW PERFECT HER LIMBS!
HER EYES PIERCE MY BEING.


SO INFATUATED WERE THE ASURAS THAT THEY ENTRUSTED THE JAR OF NECTAR TO HER CARE.
PRAY, BEAUTIFUL ONE, DISTRIBUTE THE NECTAR SO THAT OUR QUARREL MAY END BRING PEACE TO US.


MOHINI TOOK THE JAR. THEN—
I WILL DO SO IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO QUESTION MY ACTIONS.


NOT KNOWING WHO SHE REALLY WAS, THE ASURAS READILY AGREED.
THEN GO. BATHE AND ASSEMBLE IN THE MAIN HALL. YOU, THE ASURAS, IN ONE ROW AND YOUR COUSINS, THE DEVAS, IN ANOTHER.


WHEN THE DEVAS AND ASURAS HAD ASSEMBLED, MOHINI BEGAN SERVING THE NECTAR TO THE DEVAS. THE ASURAS WERE UNEASY.
THE NECTAR! WHAT IS SHE DOING?
HUSH! REMEMBER OUR PROMISE?
BESIDES, SHE IS A WOMAN. HOW CAN WE QUARREL WITH HER?
WE CAN'T. LET US AWAIT OUR TURN PATIENTLY.


BY THE TIME MOHINI REACHED THE END OF THE ROW OF DEVAS, SHE MADE SURE THAT THE NECTAR WAS EXHAUSTED.
THERE! NOT A DROP LEFT. IT IS NOT WISE TO OFFER THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY TO THE ASURAS WHO ARE AGGRESSIVE BY NATURE.


THEN, TO THE AMAZEMENT OF THE ASURAS, LORD VISHNU ASSUMED HIS OWN FORM.
IT'S VISHNU! WE'VE BEEN DELUDED!
WHERE IS OUR SHARE OF THE NECTAR? THE NECTAR!


BUT VISHNU ONLY SMILED.


THEN MOUNTING GARUDA ...


... HE FLEW AWAY INTO THE SKIES.


THE FURIOUS ASURAS CHARGED AT THE DEVAS.
WE HAVE BEEN TRICKED. DON'T SPARE THE SCOUNDRELS!
THE LORD IS ON OUR SIDE. WE HAVE DRUNK THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY. FIGHT ON.
CUT THEM UP.







* THE GODDESS OF WEALTH.







*MOTHER EARTH.

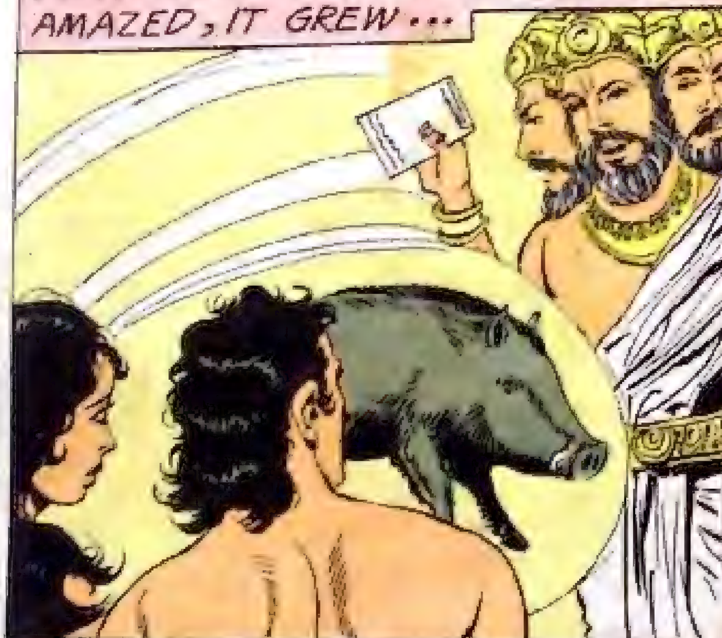
...AND SWAYAMBHUVA MANU AND SHATARUPA CAME INTO BEING.






BRAHMA WAS TROUBLED.
WHAT SHALL I DO? I WILL HAVE TO BRING THE EARTH UP. O LORD VISHNU, PLEASE HELP ME.


AS BRAHMA MEDITATED ON THE LORD, A TINY BOAR, HARDLY AS BIG AS HIS THUMB, EMERGED FROM ONE OF HIS NOSTRILS.
WHAT IS THIS WEIRD CREATURE! AND COMING OUT OF MY NOSTRIL!


EVEN AS BRAHMA GAZED AT IT AMAZED, IT GREW...


...AND GREW...

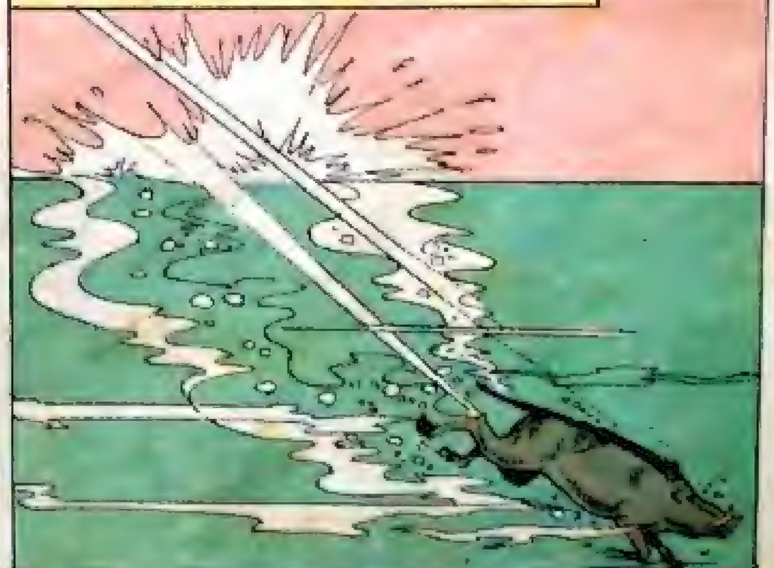

...TILL IT WAS THE SIZE OF A LARGE ELEPHANT. BRAHMA WAS FULL OF WONDER.
COULD IT BE LORD VISHNU HIMSELF?


WHILE BRAHMA PONDERED THUS, THE BOAR, WHICH WAS NOW AS LARGE AS A HUGE MOUNTAIN, ROARED.


IT IS NONE OTHER THAN LORD VISHNU!

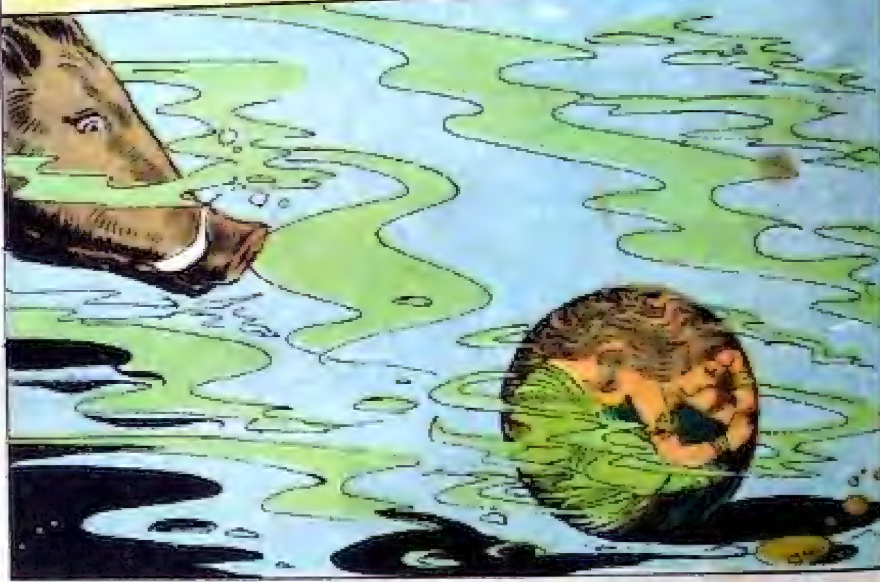

THEN, EMITTING ANOTHER TERRIFYING ROAR, IT TOOK ONE MIGHTY LEAP INTO THE AIR...

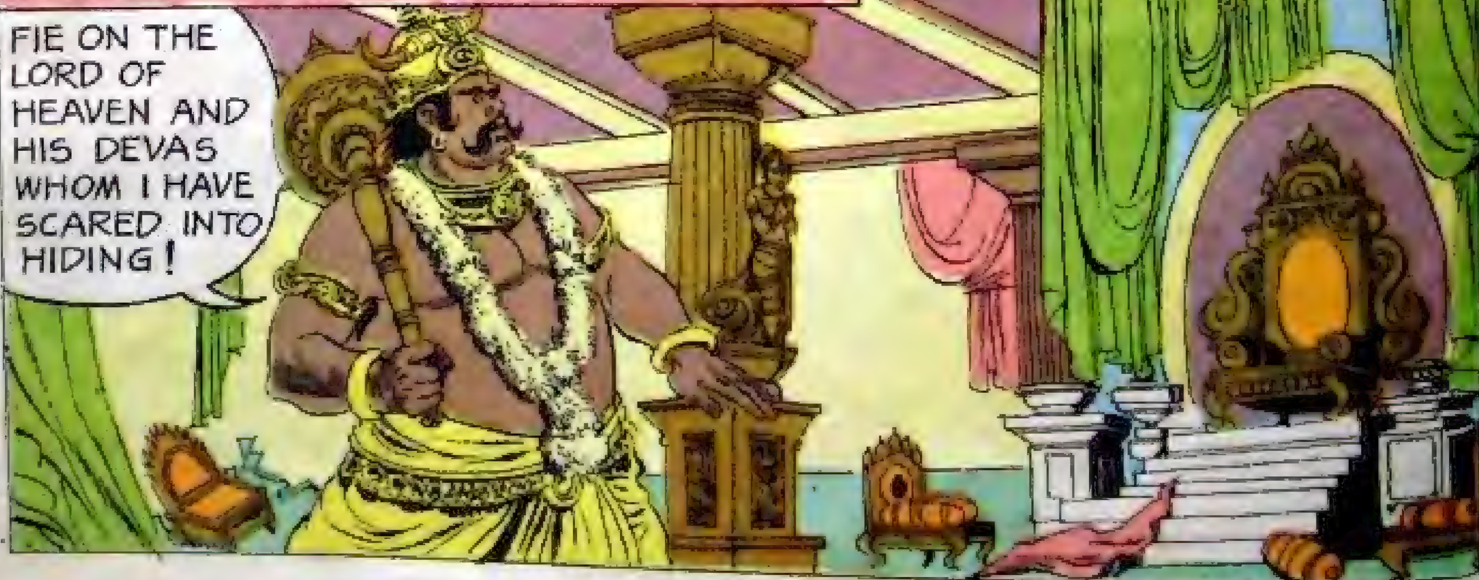

...TORE THE CLOUDS WITH ITS HOOFS...


...DIVED INTO THE OCEAN...


...AND NOSED ITS WAY ABOUT THE OCEAN-BED, IN SEARCH OF THE EARTH...


...TILL IT REACHED THE OTHER END OF THAT FATHOMLESS OCEAN AND DISCOVERED IN ITS DEPTHS...


...THE OBJECT OF ITS QUEST—BHOOMIDEVI.


MEANWHILE, THE MIGHTY ASURA, HIRANYAKSHA, THUNDERED UP TO HEAVEN, SPOILING FOR A COMBAT. BUT —
FIE ON THE LORD OF HEAVEN AND HIS DEVAS WHOM I HAVE SCARED INTO HIDING!

DISGUSTED AND ANGRY, HE MARCHED UP TO VARUNA, LORD OF THE WATERS AND FEIGNING HUMILITY, FELL AT HIS FEET.

O SUPREME LORD! O GUARDIAN OF A WHOLE SPHERE*! O RULER OF GREAT FAME! GIVE ME BATTLE.

HE MOCKS ME KNOWING FULLY WELL THAT HE IS THE MIGHTIER OF THE TWO.

BUT VARUNA CURBED HIS ANGER.

I HAVE GIVEN UP FIGHTING. I AM TOO OLD NOW. LORD VISHNU IS THE ONE YOU SHOULD APPROACH. HE ALONE WOULD BE AN EQUAL OPPONENT FOR YOU. GO SEEK HIM OUT.

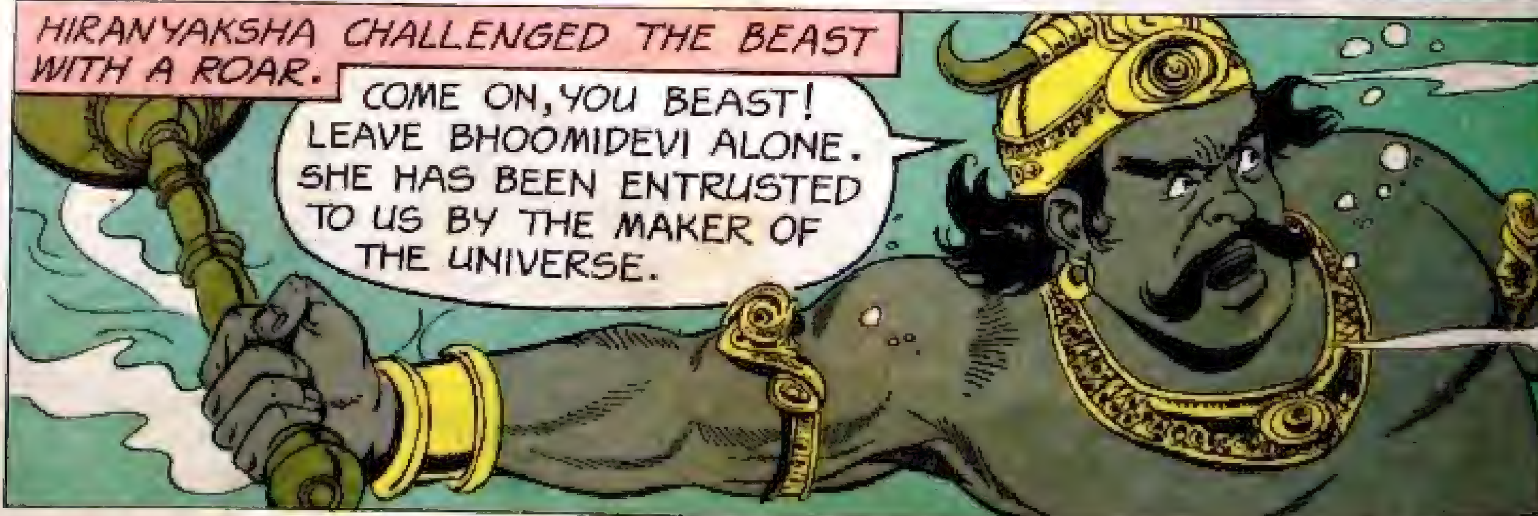
LEARNING FROM THE SAGE NARADA WHERE VISHNU WAS, HIRANYAKSHA CHARGED TOWARDS THE OCEAN-BED.

* HYDROSPHERE.


MEANWHILE THE BOAR HAD JUST DUG HIS TUSK INTO THE OCEAN-BED ...


... AND LIFTING BHOOMIDEVI ONTO IT ...


... BEGUN RISING TOWARDS THE SURFACE, WHEN—
OH! SO HE IS NOW IN THE FORM OF A WILD BEAST!


HIRANYAKSHA CHALLENGED THE BEAST WITH A ROAR.
COME ON, YOU BEAST! LEAVE BHOOMIDEVI ALONE. SHE HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO US BY THE MAKER OF THE UNIVERSE.

WHEN THE BOAR IGNORED HIM —

YOU POSSESS LITTLE POWER. ALL YOUR BATTLES ARE WON BY YOGAMAYA*, YOUR ONLY STRENGTH. BUT NOW YOU ARE TOO CLOSE TO ESCAPE UNSCATHED.

THE BOAR CONTINUED RISING AND HIRANYAKSHA GAVE CHASE.

WAIT! AREN'T YOU ASHAMED OF YOURSELF? RUNNING AWAY FROM A FOE WHO CHALLENGES YOU!

BUT THE BOAR DID NOT EVEN LOOK BACK.

SHAMELESS WRETCH. THE SHARPEST INSULT FAILS TO PIERCE YOUR THICK HIDE.

LET HIM RAVE. MY TASK IS TO TAKE BHOOMIDEVI TO SAFETY. SHE TREMBLES WITH FRIGHT. AH! WE'VE ALMOST REACHED THE SURFACE.

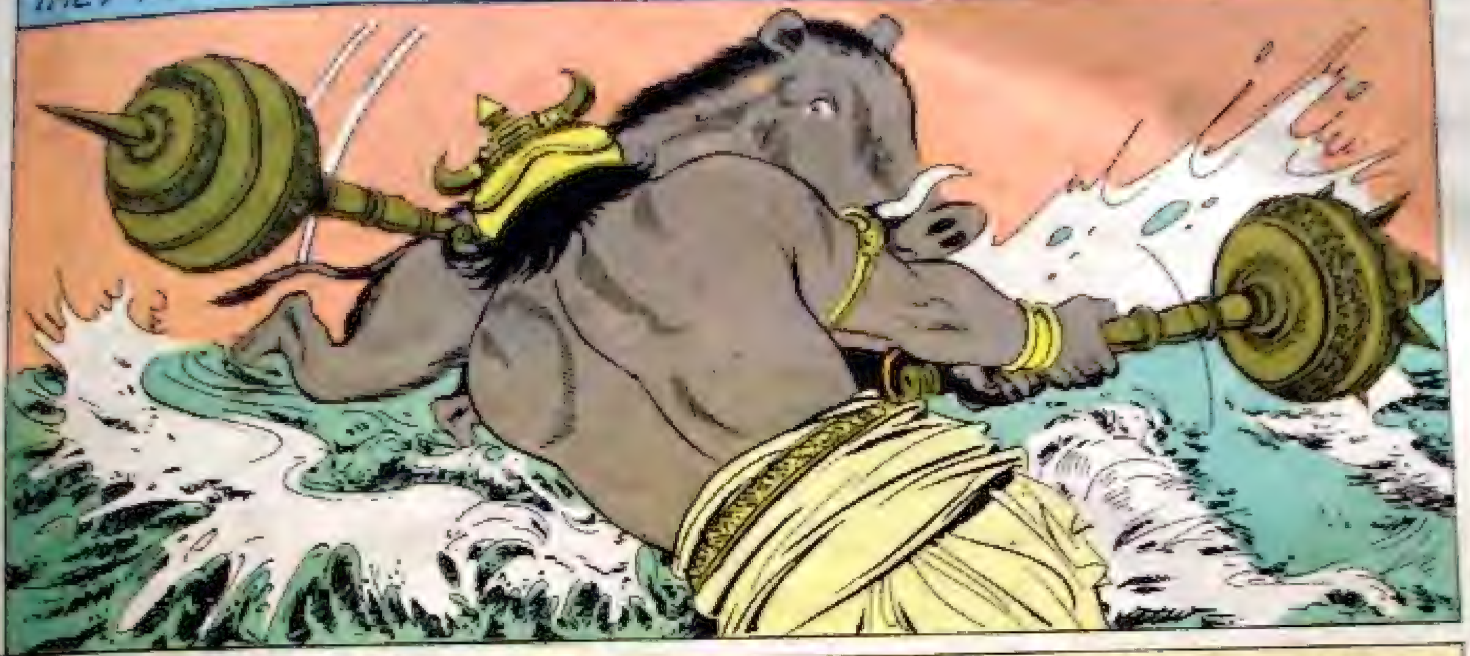
* POWER OF ILLUSORY CREATION

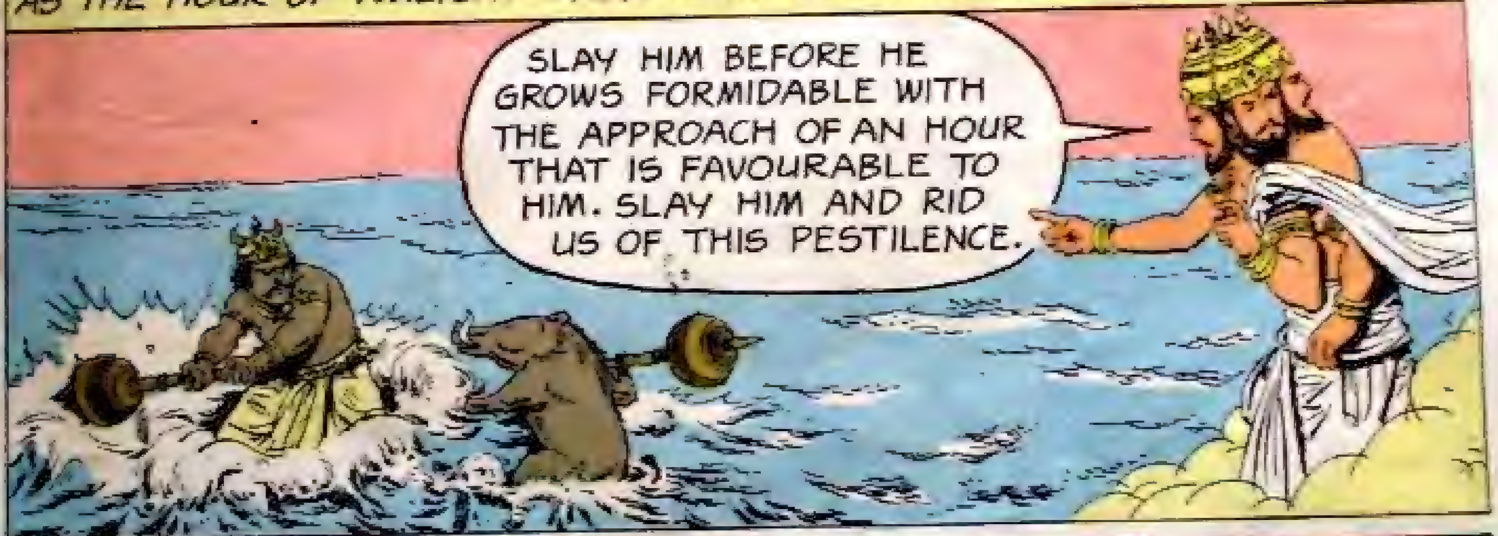

AS SOON AS HE REACHED THE SURFACE OF THE OCEAN, HE PLACED BHOOMIDEVI GENTLY ON IT AND BLESSED HER.
MAY YOU SUPPORT YOURSELF IN KEEPING WITH THE DIVINE ORDER.


THEN HE TURNED TO FACE HIRANYAKSHA, HIS SPEECH HEAVY WITH SARCASM.
O WRETCH, SCARED AWAY BY YOUR MACE, WE WHO HAVE STOLEN THE EARTH MUST TAKE OUR STAND IN THE BATTLEFIELD. FOR, HAVING INCURRED THE WRATH OF A POWERFUL ENEMY, WHERE CAN WE GO?


HIRANYAKSHA BECAME FURIOUS. SEETHING WITH ANGER, HE LIFTED HIS MACE AND ...


...SPRANG TOWARDS THE ANIMAL. BUT THE BOAR STEPPED ASIDE AND RAISED HIS OWN.


THEY FOUGHT FOR A LONG WHILE, EACH STRIKING OUT WITH HIS MACE.


AS THE HOUR OF TWILIGHT DREW NEAR, BRAHMA SPOKE TO THE BOAR.
SLAY HIM BEFORE HE GROWS FORMIDABLE WITH THE APPROACH OF AN HOUR THAT IS FAVOURABLE TO HIM. SLAY HIM AND RID US OF THIS PESTILENCE.


HEARING BRAHMA'S WORDS, HIRANYAKSHA HURLED HIS MACE AT THE ANIMAL.


THE MACE WAS CAUGHT BY THE BOAR AS IF IT WERE A TOY.


ENRAGED, HIRANYAKSHA BEGAN HITTING OUT WITH HIS FISTS ON THE CHEST OF THE BOAR.


THE BOAR PLAYFULLY HIT THE DEMON BEHIND HIS EARS.


HIRANYAKSHA REELED AND FELL DEAD.


O LORD, ONLY YOU IN YOUR IMMACULATE GOODNESS COULD HAVE LIFTED BHOO-MIDEVI TO THE SUR-FACE OF THE OCEAN. ONLY YOUR INVINCIBLE SELF COULD HAVE SAVED US FROM THIS SCOURGE.

NARASIMHA AVATAR



VISHNU, IN THE FORM OF A BOAR, HAD KILLED THE EVIL ASURA, HIRANYAKSHA. THE DEVAS WERE HAPPY AND THERE WAS MUCH REJOICING IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH, BUT NOT FOR LONG.





...WHILE I PRACTISE SEVERE PENANCES AND BECOME THE MASTER OF ALL THE THREE WORLDS—HEAVEN, EARTH AND OUR OWN REGIONS.



AND HIRANYAKASHIPU WENT TO MOUNT MANDARA AND BEGAN HIS PENANCES.

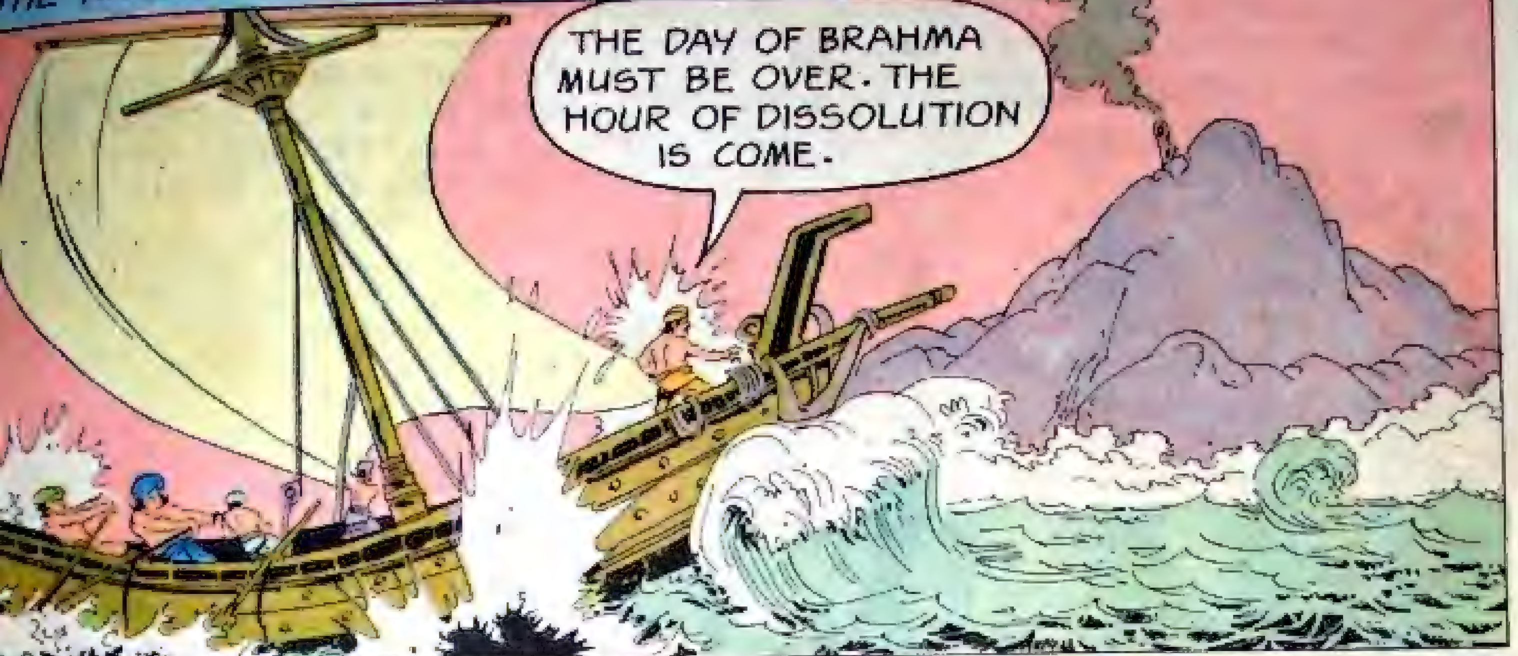


SO HE STOOD FOR YEARS AND YEARS.



ANT HILLS AND GRASS GREW ON HIS PERSON BUT HE DID NOT MOVE.




THE RIVERS AND OCEANS TREMBLED —
THE DAY OF BRAHMA MUST BE OVER. THE HOUR OF DISSOLUTION IS COME.


THE EARTH AND HER MOUNTAINS QUAKED ...


... AND THE STARS AND PLANETS DARTED ABOUT IN PANIC.


SO INTENSE WAS HIRANYAKASHIPU'S PENANCE THAT THE FIERY SMOKE EMERGING FROM HIS HEAD BEGAN TO SCORCH EVERYTHING IN ITS WAKE.

THE DEVAS WERE TERRIFIED. LED BY INDRA, THEY WENT TO BRAHMA, THE CREATOR.

O MERCIFUL LORD, PRAY DO SOMETHING, ANYTHING, BEFORE THE THREE WORLDS OF YOUR CREATION ARE CONSUMED BY THE FIRE OF THE ASURA'S PENANCES.

MOVED BY THEIR PLIGHT, BRAHMA WENT TO MOUNT MANDARA. A FEW SAGES ACCOMPANIED HIM.

ENOUGH, O ASURA. ARISE. I HAVE BEEN CONQUERED BY YOUR AUSTERITIES. ANY BOON YOU SEEK SHALL BE YOURS.

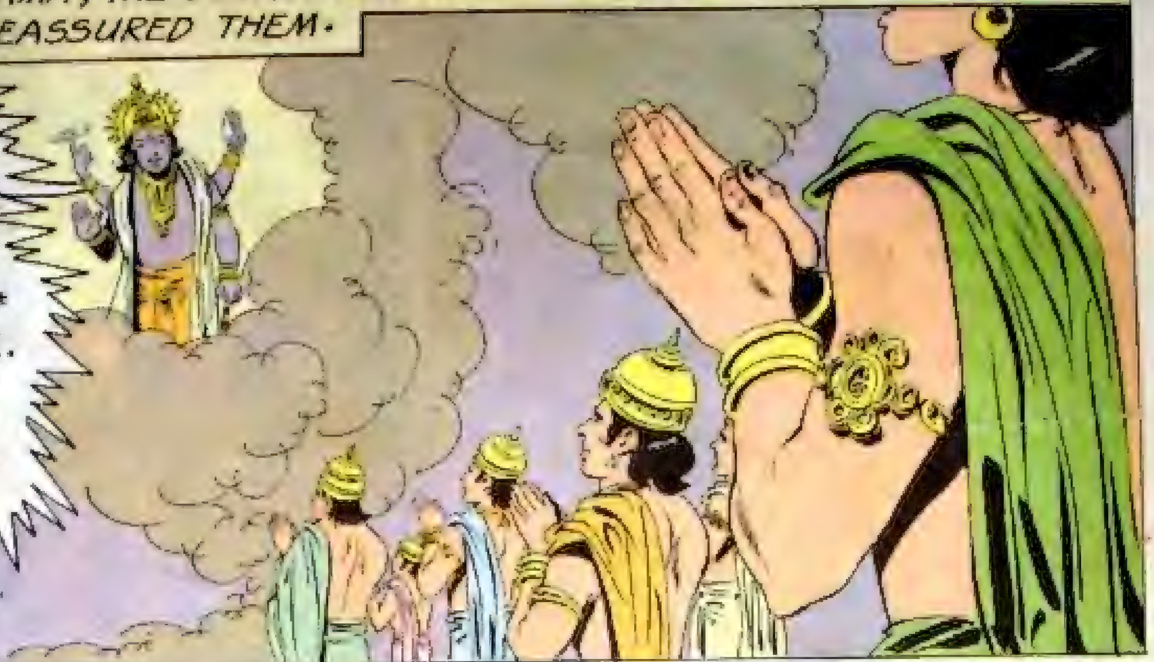
THE HOLY WATER FROM THE CREATOR'S KAMANDALU REJUVENATED THE ASURA. HE EMERGED, HANDSOME AND RADIANT.

LET NOT DEATH COME TO ME EITHER BY MAN OR BEAST, BY DAY OR BY NIGHT, INDOORS OR OUTDOORS, ON EARTH OR IN THE SKY. GRANT ME UNDISPUTED LORDSHIP OVER THE MATERIAL WORLD.

SO BE IT.

ARMED WITH THE BOONS, THE ASURA LOST NO TIME IN CONQUERING AND BRINGING UNDER HIS SWAY, BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH.

I WISH TO OCCUPY THE PALACE OF THE LORD OF THE DEVAS. DRIVE HIM OUT.



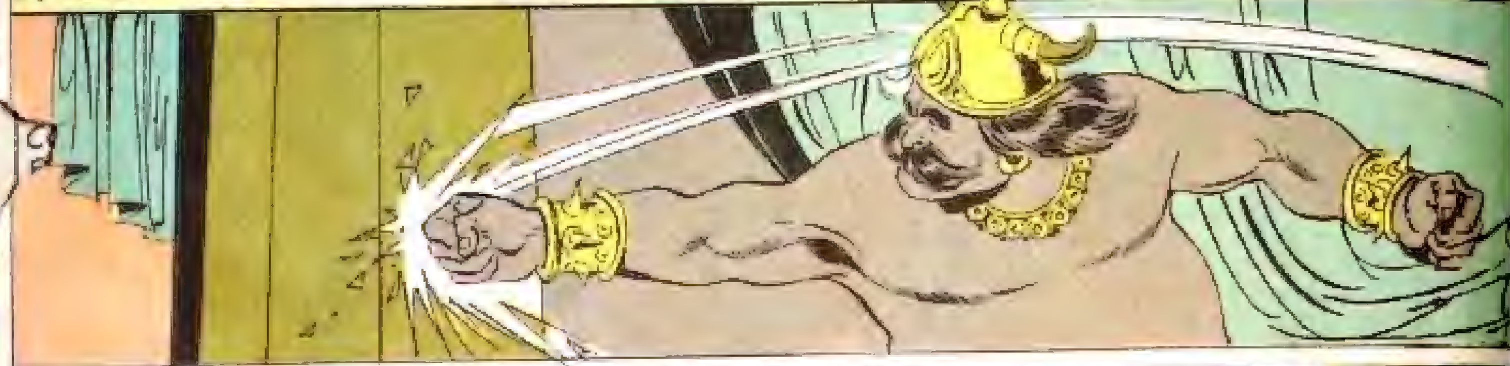




* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO. 38 – PRAHLAD


AT LAST PRAHLAD SPOKE.
FROM WHOM NOT ONLY I BUT ALSO YOU AND ALL OTHER POWERFUL BEINGS DERIVE THEIRS — THE ALL-PERVADING LORD VISHNU.


HIRANYAKASHIPU BECAME LIVID WITH RAGE.
IF HE IS ALL-PERVADING, HE MUST BE IN THIS PILLAR. I AM GOING TO SLAY YOU NOW. LET HIM COME AND PROTECT ...


A RESOUNDING CRASH DROWNED HIS WORDS. THE PILLAR CRACKED AND

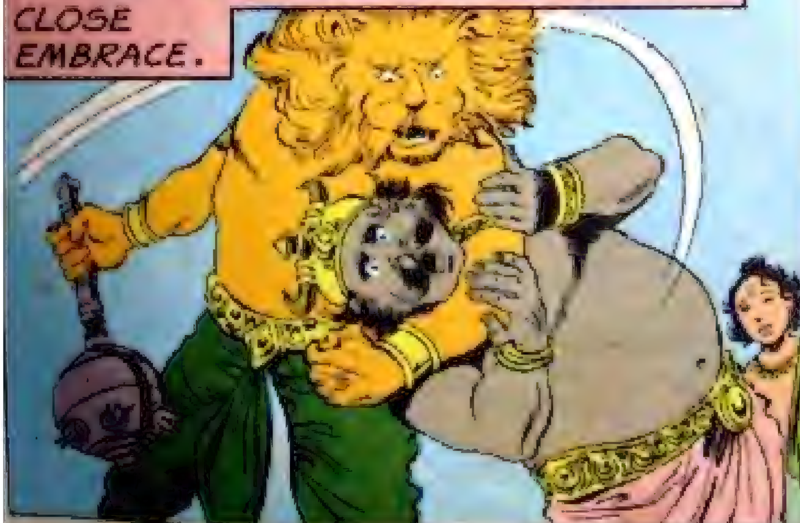

... LORD VISHNU IN THE FORM OF NARASIMHA* EMERGED AND SUBSTANTIATED HIS DEVOTEE'S WORDS.
HE IS NEITHER A BEAST NOR A HUMAN BEING. WHAT MIGHT THIS STRANGE CREATURE BE?

* MAN-LION


AS NARASIMHA ADVANCED MENACINGLY UPON HIM, HIRANYAKASHIPU TRIED TO REGAIN HIS COMPOSURE.
IT MUST BE VISHNU. HE HAS TAKEN THIS FORM TO KILL ME. HE MAY HAVE TAKEN CARE OF ONE CONDITION BUT HE STILL CANNOT HARM ME.


EMBOLDENED BY THAT THOUGHT, THE ASURA PICKED UP A MACE AND...


...ROARING LOUDLY RUSHED AT NARASIMHA.


BUT AS HE CAME NEAR, NARASIMHA SEIZED HIM, MACE AND ALL, IN A CLOSE EMBRACE.


HIRANYAKASHIPU HOWEVER SLIPPED THROUGH HIS ARMS...


...AND GRABBING A SWORD...


...CHARGED ONCE AGAIN.


WATCHING HIS MOVEMENTS, NARASIMHA SENT FORTH A SHRILL PEAL OF LAUGHTER FOLLOWED BY A WEIRD ROAR.


AND THE NEXT MOMENT, THE ASURA FOUND HIMSELF IN THE VICE-LIKE GRIP OF NARASIMHA'S CLAWS.
IT IS THE TWILIGHT HOUR! NEITHER DAY NOR NIGHT...

NARASIMHA CARRIED THE ASURA TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE HALL.

WE ARE NEITHER INDOORS NOR OUTDOORS!

AND THERE, UNDER THE GREAT ARCH OF THE DOORWAY, NARASIMHA THREW THE ASURA ACROSS HIS THIGHS ...

NEITHER ON EARTH NOR IN THE SKY. ALAS! VISHNU HAS OUTWITTED ME!

...AND TORE HIM TO DEATH WITH HIS CLAWS. THUS DID VISHNU, BY THE FAITH OF HIS DEVOTEE, PREVENT THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL AND ESTABLISH VIRTUE.

VAMANA AVATAR

BENT ON CONQUERING THE DEVAS, BALI*, THE KING OF THE ASURAS, GUIDED B
SHUKRACHARYA, HIS PRECEPTOR, PERFORMED THE VISHWAJIT SACRIFICE**

... AND RECEIVED FROM THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE A GOLDEN CHARIOT, CELESTIAL WEAPONS AND A COAT OF MAIL, FOR THE CONQUEST OF HEAVEN



* GRANDSON OF PRAHLAD.

** A SACRIFICE PERFORMED TO GAIN MASTERY OVER THE THREE WORLDS.

DONNING THE ARMOUR, BALI MOUNTED THE CHARIOT AND WITH HIS ASURA HORDES ADVANCED ON AMARAVATI, THE CAPITAL OF THE DEVAS.



IN THE PALACE OF INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS—



AS BALI LAID SIEGE TO THE CITY, INDRA WENT TO BRIHASPATI, HIS PRECEPTOR.





BRIHASPATI NODDED WISELY.

YOU ARE RIGHT. BALI AT THE MOMENT IS INVINCIBLE. I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO RETREAT FROM HEAVEN TILL THE TIDE TURNS IN YOUR FAVOUR.

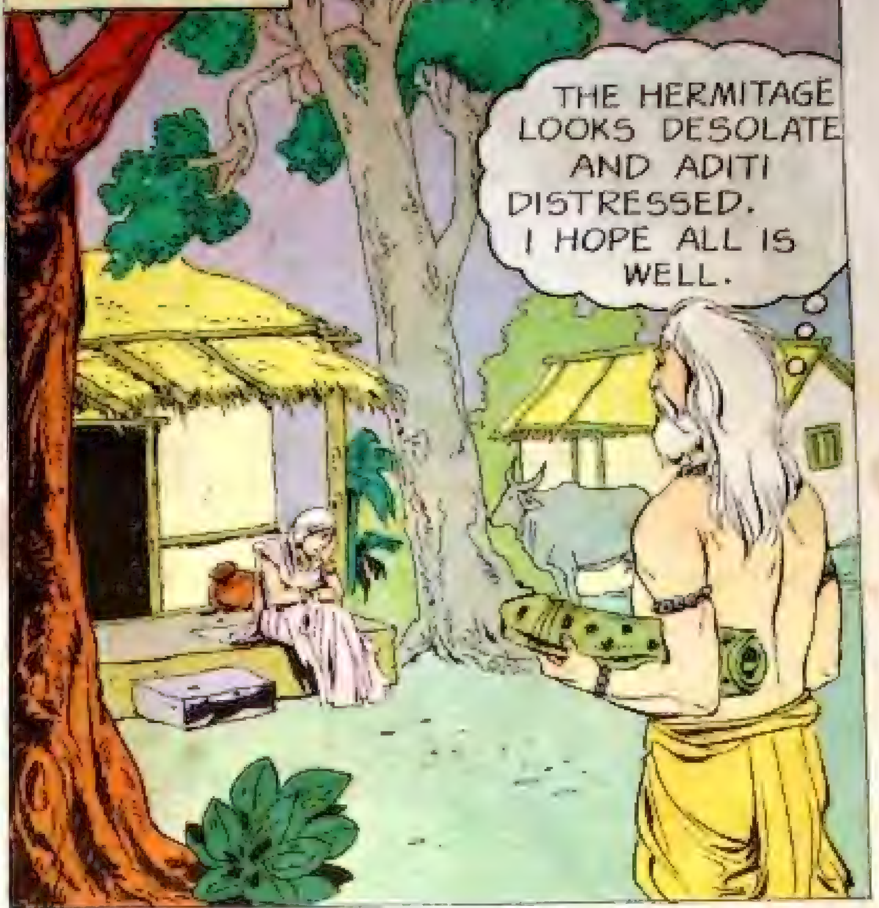
AND WHEN WILL THAT BE?

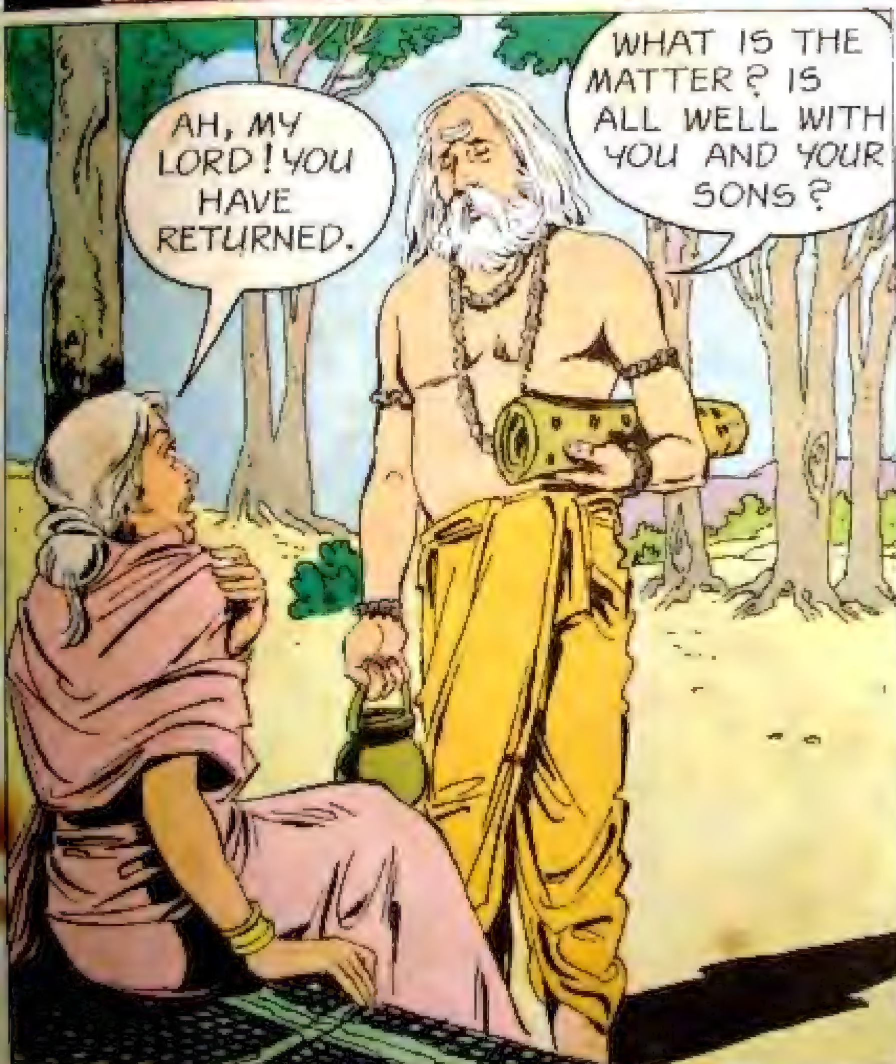
WHEN HIS GURU CURSES HIM FOR IGNORING HIS COUNSEL.

SO, INDRA AND THE DEVAS ABANDONED HEAVEN; AND BALI PROMPTLY OCCUPIED IT WITH HIS ASURA HORDES.

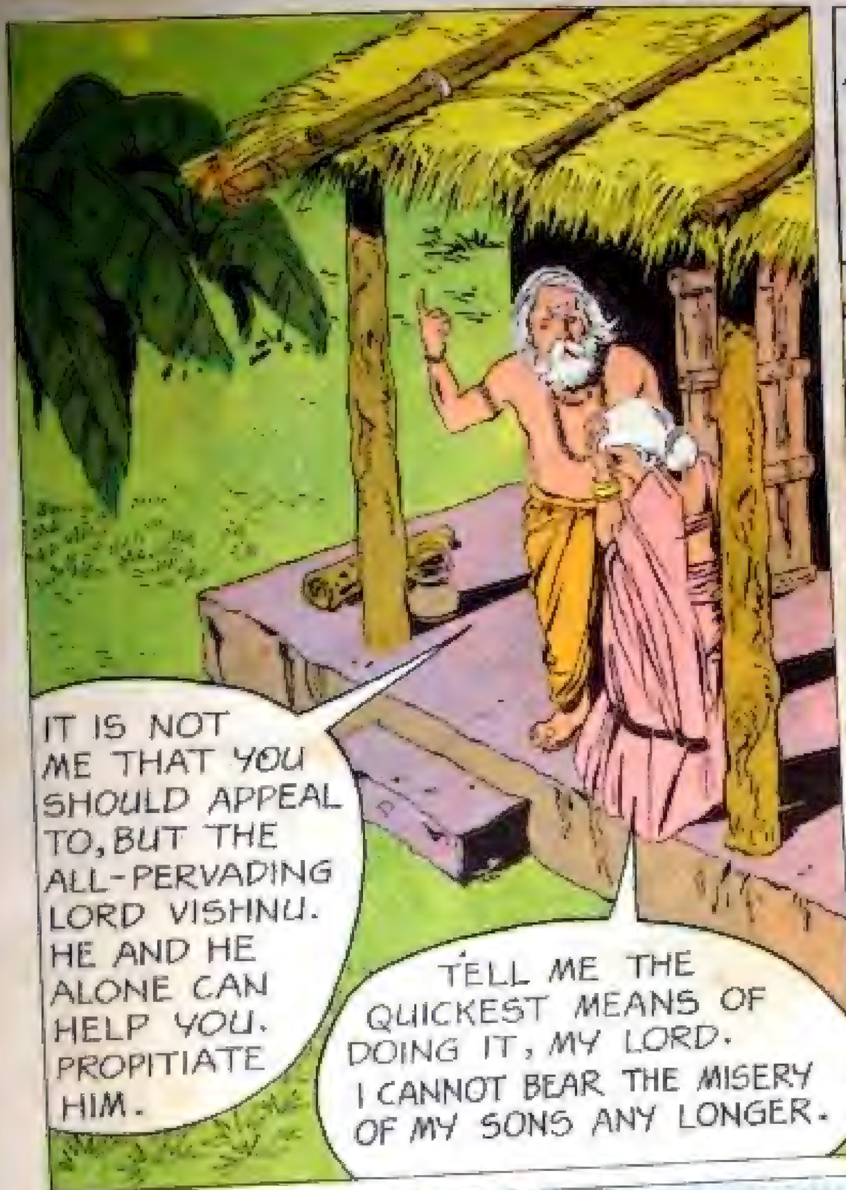
I AM NOW THE LORD OF ALL THE THREE WORLDS!


MEANWHILE, ADITI, THE MOTHER OF THE DEVAS, SAT BROODING ABOUT THEIR SORRY PLIGHT. SAGE KASHYAP, HER HUSBAND, WAS AWAY IN THE FOREST, MEDITATING.
IF ONLY MY LORD WERE HERE.


JUST THEN KASHYAP ENTERED THE HERMITAGE.
THE HERMITAGE LOOKS DESOLATE AND ADITI DISTRESSED. I HOPE ALL IS WELL.


AH, MY LORD! YOU HAVE RETURNED.
WHAT IS THE MATTER? IS ALL WELL WITH YOU AND YOUR SONS?

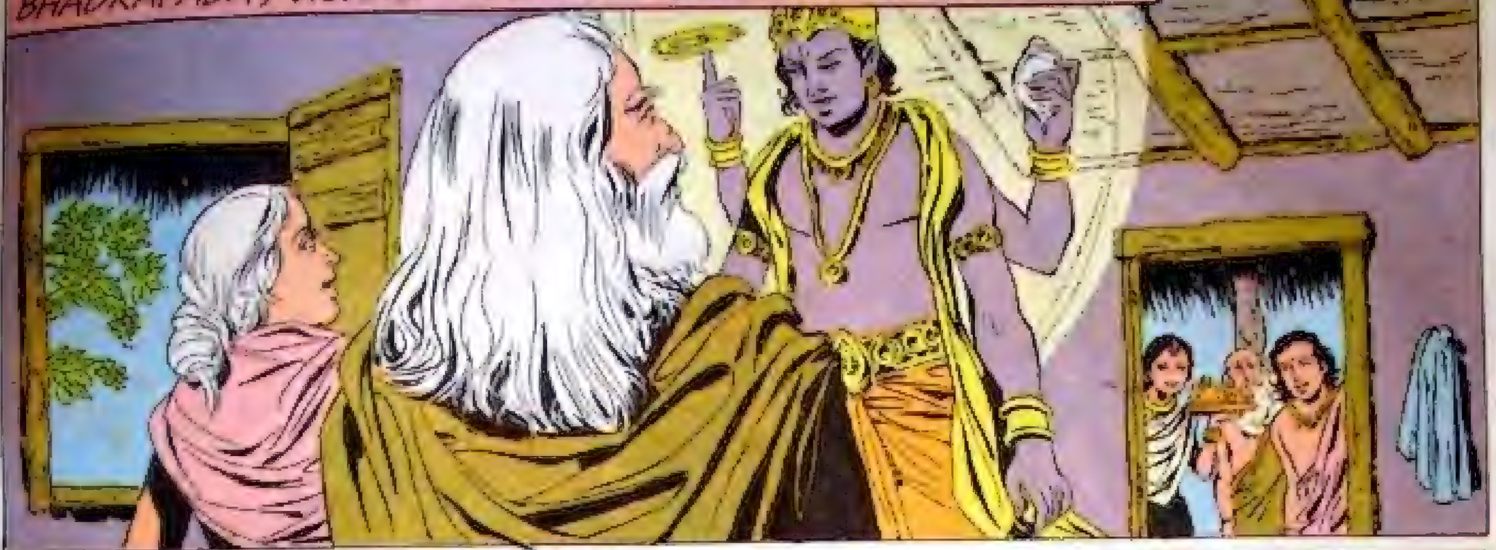

NO, MY LORD. THE ASURAS HAVE USURPED OUR KINGDOM AND WITH IT, OUR SPLENDOUR AND OUR GLORY. YOU MUST HELP MY SONS TO RETRIEVE THEIR LOST STATUS.

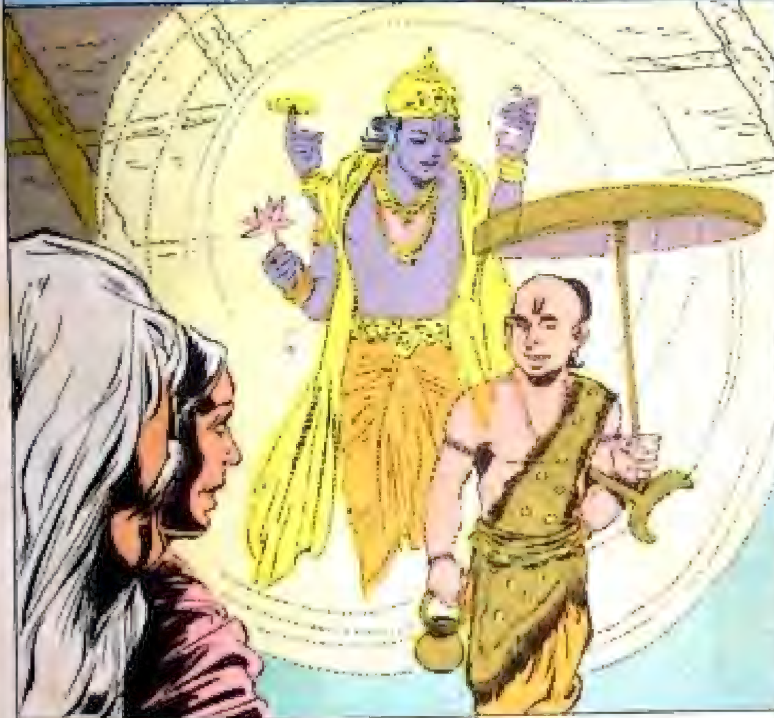






* VOW OF MILK (NOTHING BUT MILK SHOULD BE DRUNK BY THOSE WHO OBSERVE THIS VOW.)









* THE SIXTH MONTH OF THE HINDU CALENDAR.

** THE SUN-GOD

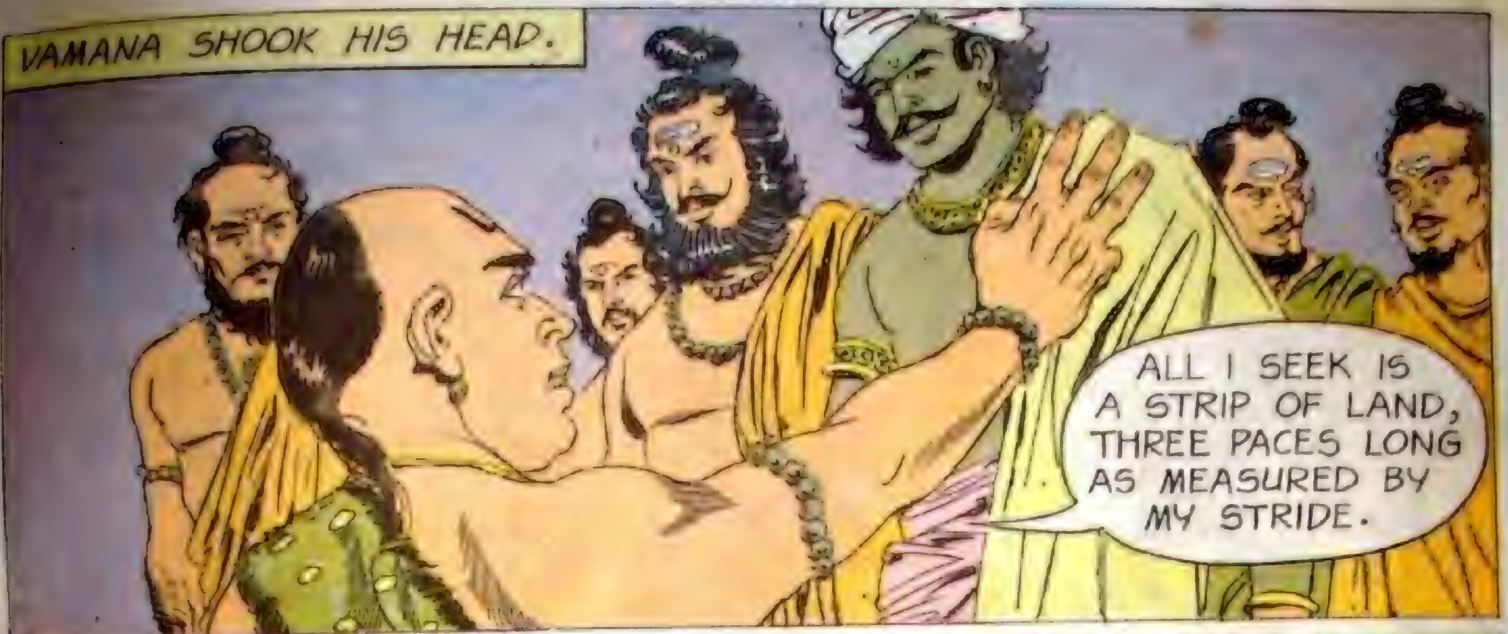

AS THEIR EYES GOT USED TO THE BRILLIANCE, THEY SAW THAT A BRAHMAN MIDGET HAD ENTERED THE SACRIFICIAL ENCLOSURE.

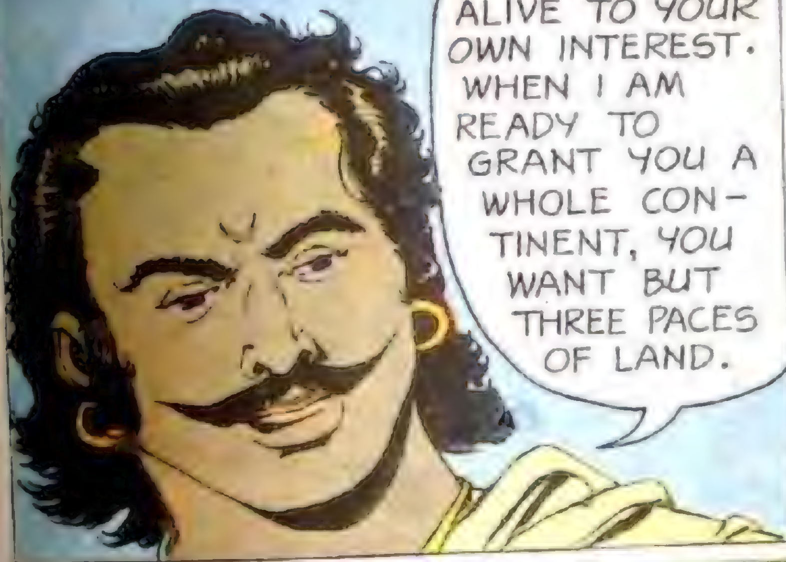

BALI ROSE FROM HIS SEAT TO RECEIVE HIM.
WELCOME, O HOLY BRAHMAN. THIS LAND OF MINE HAS BEEN CONSECRATED BY YOUR TINY FEET.


THEN HE GAVE THE DIVINE MIDGET VAMANA, A SPECIAL SEAT AND WASHED HIS FEET.
O HOLY ONE, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU ? PRAY TAKE FROM ME WHATEVER YOU DESIRE.


VAMANA WAS QUIET.
DO NOT HESITATE, O BRAHMACHARI.* WHAT WILL YOU HAVE — A COW, GOLD, ELEPHANTS, HORSES, CHARIOTS, A BRIDE, A PALATIAL HOUSE, PROSPEROUS VILLAGES...?

* CELIBATE.

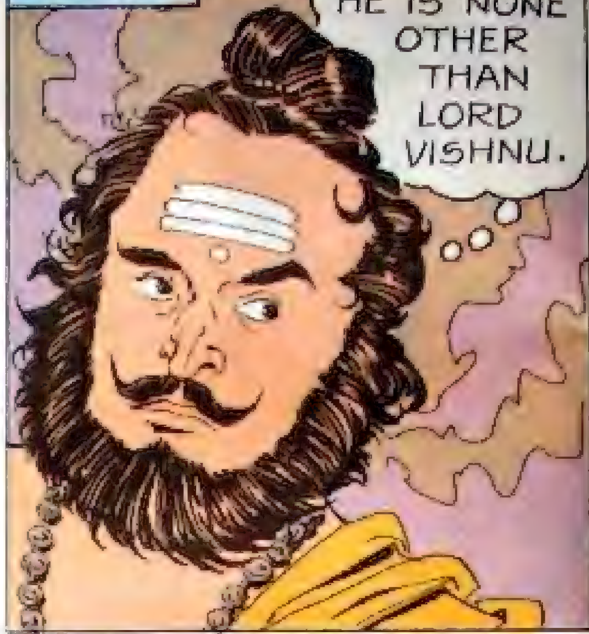

VAMANA SHOOK HIS HEAD.
ALL I SEEK IS A STRIP OF LAND, THREE PACES LONG AS MEASURED BY MY STRIDE.


SEEKING TO WIN ACCLAIM FOR HIS GENEROSITY, BALI WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH VAMANA'S HUMBLE DEMAND.
YOU ARE TOO YOUNG TO BE ALIVE TO YOUR OWN INTEREST. WHEN I AM READY TO GRANT YOU A WHOLE CON-TINENT, YOU WANT BUT THREE PACES OF LAND.


HE WHO CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITH THREE PACES OF LAND WILL NOT BE SATISFIED EVEN WITH A WHOLE CONTINENT.


THREE PACES OF LAND ARE ALL I NEED AND THREE PACES OF LAND ARE ALL THAT I WILL HAVE.


BALI LAUGHED AND GAVE IN.
THEN YOU SHALL HAVE AS MUCH.


AT THAT MOMENT SHUKRACHARYA REALISED THE TRUTH.
HE IS NONE OTHER THAN LORD VISHNU.


AS BALI TOOK THE CONSECRATING WATER IN HIS PALM, SHUKRACHARYA STOPPED HIM.
WAIT! THIS MIDGET IS LORD VISHNU. HE IS HERE TO HELP OUR ENEMIES, THE DEVAS.
NOTHING CAN BE DONE NOW, O VENERABLE ONE. I HAVE GIVEN MY WORD.


RETRACT IT. IT IS NOT WRONG TO DO SO WHEN ONE'S LIFE AND THE LIVES OF ONE'S DEPENDANTS ARE AT STAKE.

BALI WAS QUIET FOR A MOMENT. THEN—

HAVING PROMISED ONCE THAT I SHALL GIVE, HOW CAN I, BALI, THE GRANDSON OF VIRTUOUS PRAHLAD, REFUSE LIKE A COMMON CHEAT? I WILL GIVE THIS BRAHMAN THE LAND HE SEEKS, O HOLY SAGE, COME WHAT MAY.

FURIOUS THAT HIS DISCIPLE HAD DARED TO DISREGARD HIS ADVICE, SHUKRACHARYA CURSED HIM.

HAVE YOU GROWN SO ARROGANT AS TO IGNORE MY COMMAND? CONCEITED FOOL THAT YOU ARE, YOU WILL SOON FALL FROM YOUR HIGH POSITION.

BALI'S WIFE THEN CAME WITH A GOLDEN PITCHER FULL OF WATER TO WASH VAMANA'S FEET.

AND LO! VAMANA BEGAN TO GROW...


...AND GROW. BALI AND ALL THE SAGES PRESENT WERE ASTOUNDED TO SEE THE WHOLE OF CREATION IN VAMANA'S BODY...

...AS HE BEGAN TO MEASURE THE THREE PACES. WITH HIS FIRST STRIDE HE COVERED THE EARTH...

...AND WITH HIS SECOND, THE HEAVENS.

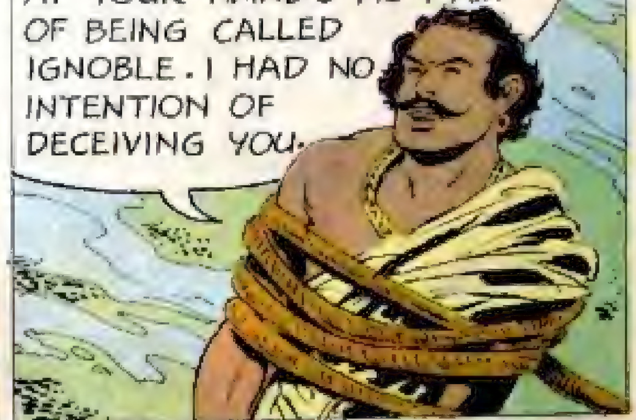

THE ENRAGED ASURAS TOOK UP ARMS AND RAN TOWARDS HIM.
HE IS NO BRAHMAN. IT IS VISHNU HIMSELF, OUT TO DELUDE US!


BUT BALI STOPPED THEM.
PRAY DO NOT MAKE WAR. RETREAT.
I HAVE BEEN CURSED BY MY GURU. MY FALL IS INEVITABLE.


AS THE ASURAS RETREATED TO THE NETHER WORLD, GARUDA BOUND BALI WITH ROPES ...

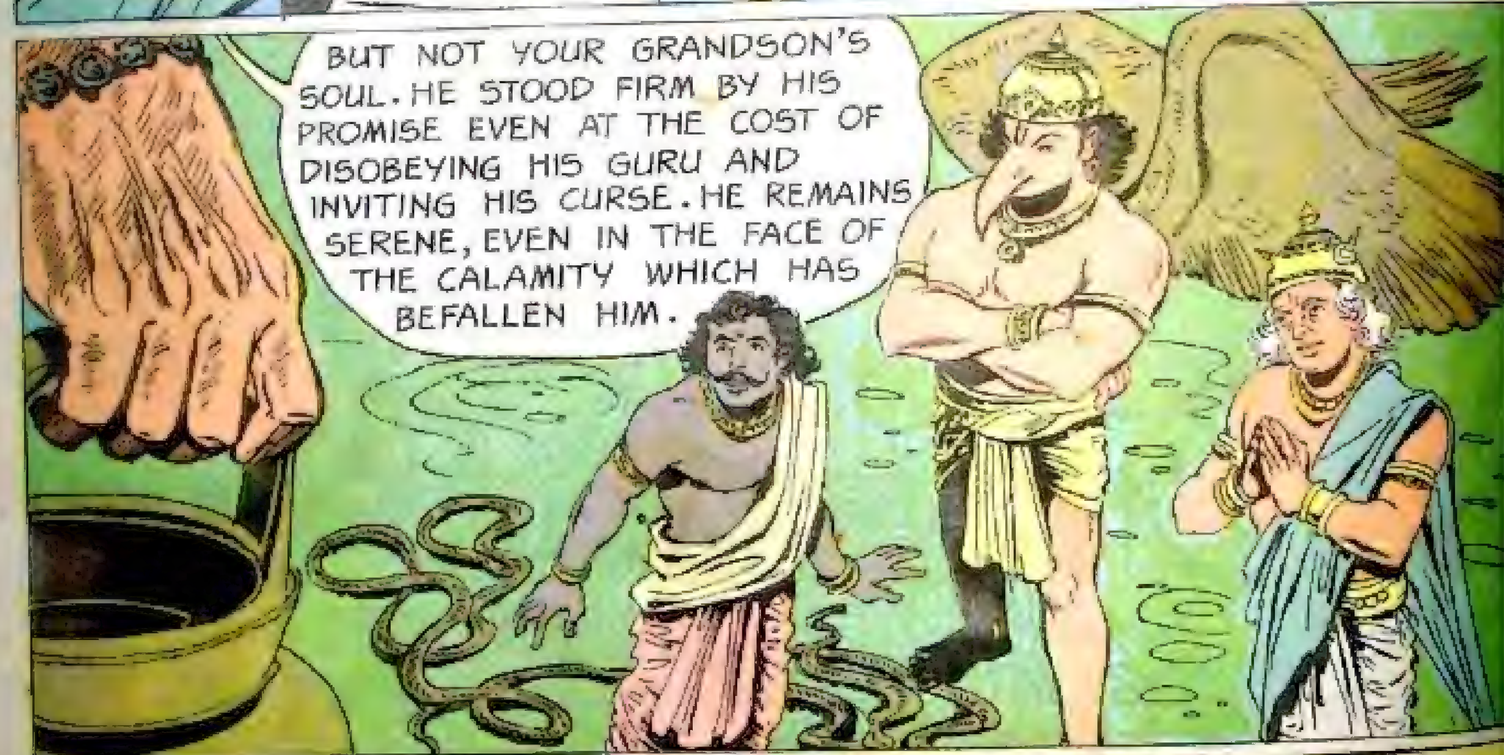

...AND TOOK HIM TO VISHNU.
THOUGH CURSED BY HIS PRECEPTOR, THIS GREAT SOUL DID NOT GO BACK ON HIS WORD. I MUST TEST HIM FURTHER AND ENHANCE HIS REPUTATION FOR BEING STEAD-FAST.


WITH THAT INTENTION VISHNU SPOKE HARSH WORDS TO HIM.
YOU PROMISED ME THREE PACES OF LAND AND I HAVE COVERED ALL THAT WAS YOURS IN TWO. YOU HAVE FAILED TO KEEP YOUR WORD. YOU WILL HAVE TO SUFFER FOR IT.


BALI WAS UNPERTURBED.
O ILLUSTRIOUS ONE, I AM NOT AFRAID OF PUNISHMENT AT YOUR HANDS AS I AM OF BEING CALLED IGNOBLE. I HAD NO INTENTION OF DECEIVING YOU.


TO PROVE HIS STATEMENT HE BENT HIS HEAD LOW BEFORE VISHNU.
PRAY, PLACE YOUR THIRD STEP ON MY HEAD, WHICH IS MORE VALUABLE TO ME THAN ALL MY POSSESSIONS PUT TO-GETHER.





HE HAS ALL BUT EARNED ENTRY INTO MY OWN REALMS WHICH EVEN THE DEVAS FIND DIFFICULT OF ACCESS. BUT FIRST HE WILL ENJOY FOR A WHOLE MANVANTARA THE POSITION OF INDRA AS HE DESIRED IT.



THUS DID VISHNU IN HIS VAMANA AVATAR BEG THE EARTH AND THE HEAVENS FOR THE DEVAS FROM THEIR ENEMY, THE RIGHTEOUS BUT VAIN KING OF THE ASURAS.

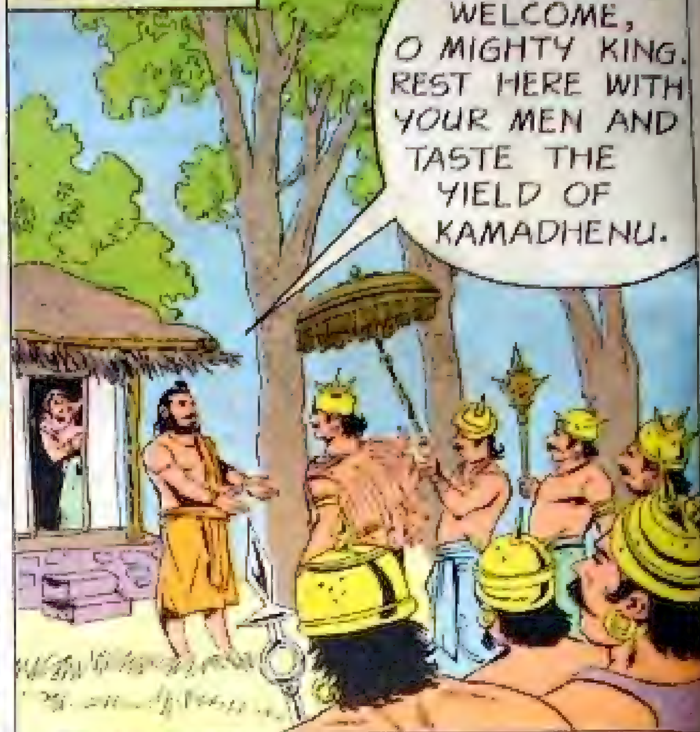
PARASHURAMA AVATAR

KING ARJUNA, THE RULER OF THE HAIHAYAS, HAD PROPITIATED LORD DATTATREYA AND HAD SECURED FROM HIM BOONS WHICH MADE HIM INVINCIBLE. BUT ARJUNA MISUSED HIS POWERS AND BECAME A MERCILESS TYRANT.

TO VANQUISH HIM AND ALL SUCH EVIL KSHATRIYAS, LORD VISHNU CAME TO EARTH AS RAMA, THE YOUNGEST SON OF SAGE JAMADAGNI, AND HIS WIFE, RENUKA.

IT'S STRANGE THAT MY SON SHOULD KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT WEAPONS AND THEIR USE.

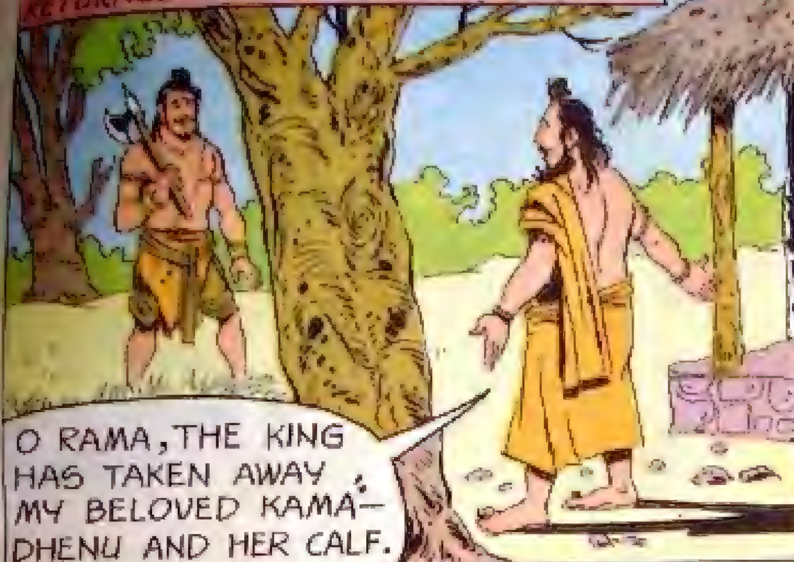


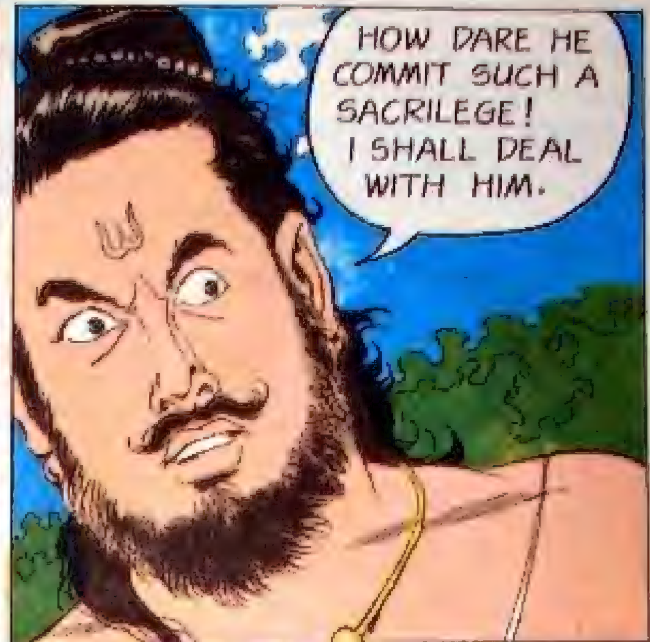






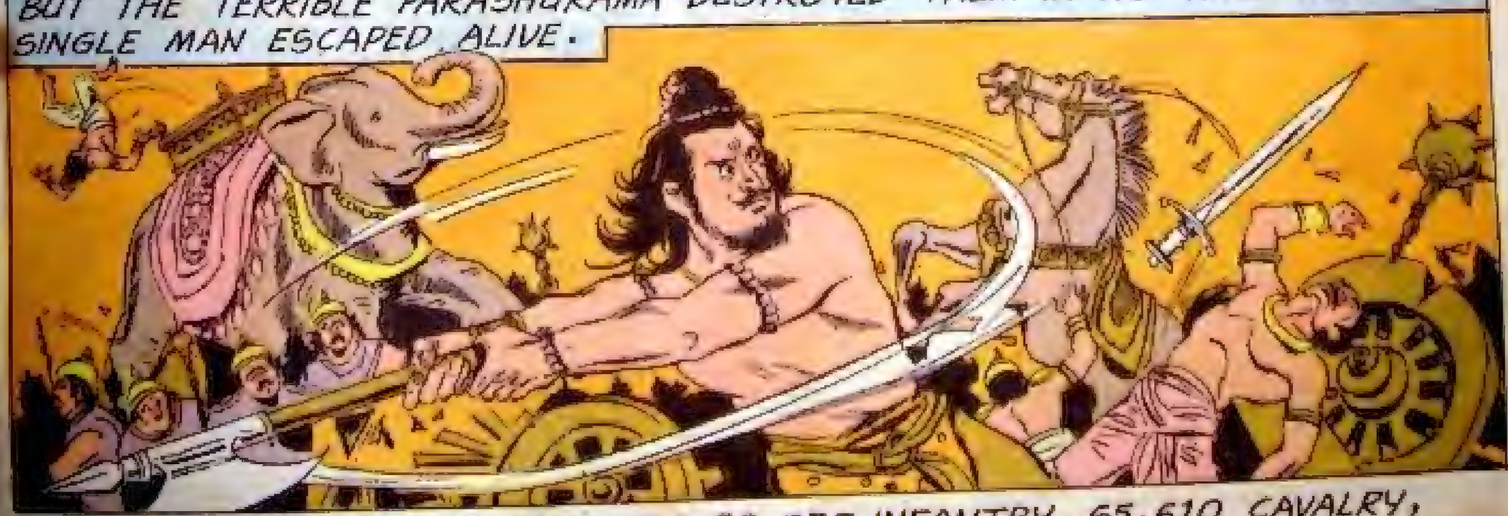
* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO. 42 - PARASHURAMA.



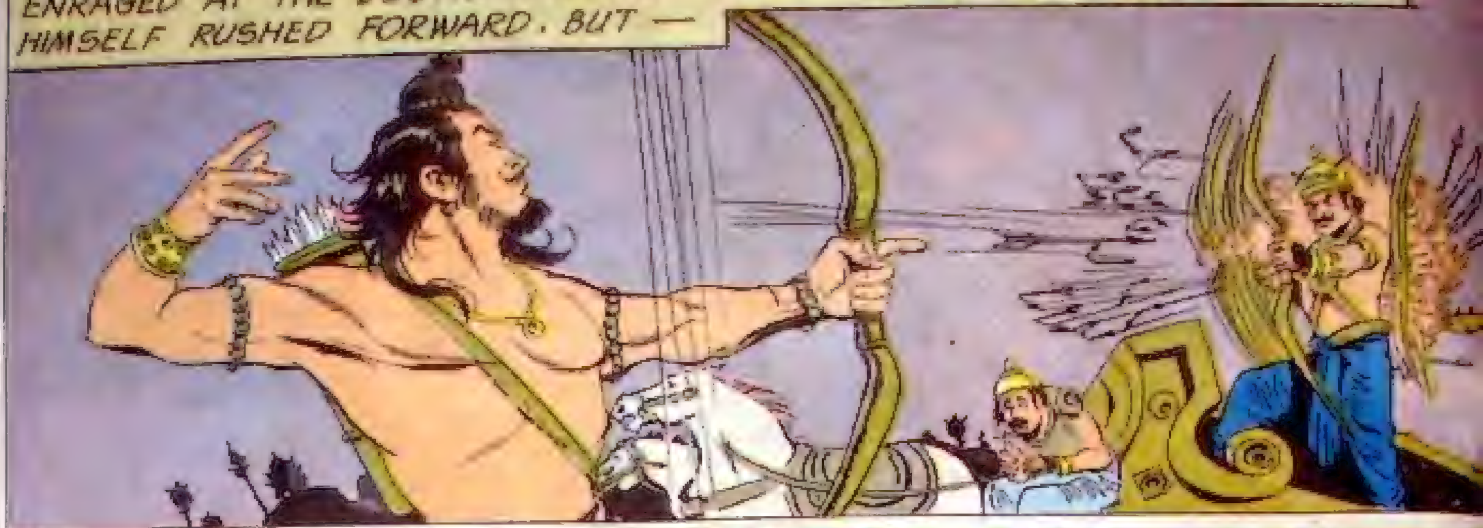


BRANDISHING HIS AXE, AN ENRAGED PARASHURAMA STORMED INTO MAHISHMATI, ARJUNA'S CAPITAL. ARJUNA WAS ALARMED.

IT'S PARASHURAMA! SEND OUT SEVENTEEN OF OUR MOST POWERFUL AKSHAUHINIS* TO MEET HIM.

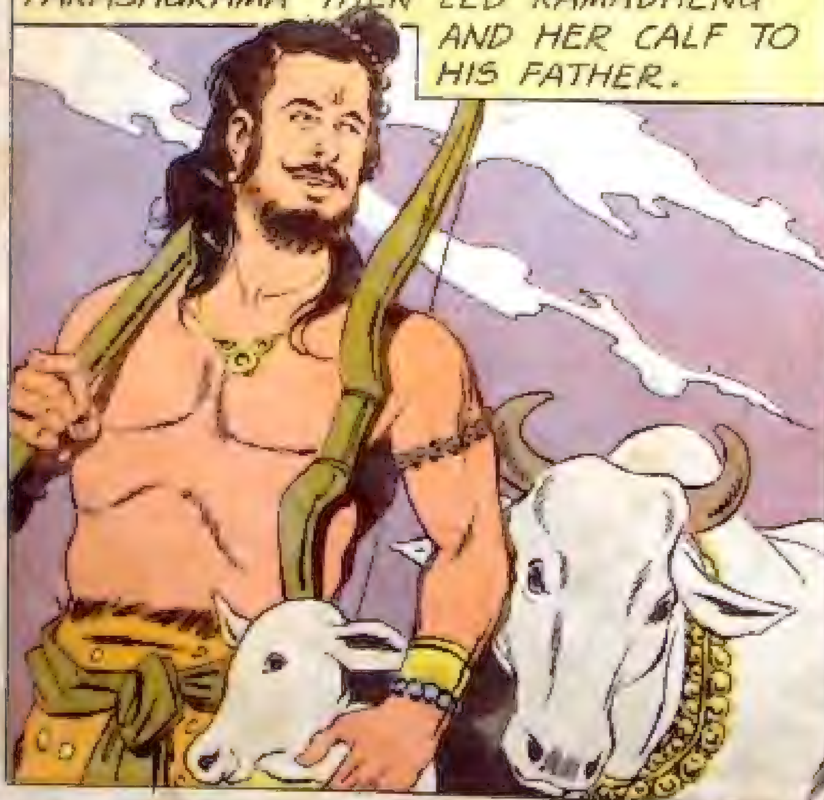


* AN AKSHAUHINI CONSISTED OF 1,09,350 INFANTRY, 65,610 CAVALRY, 21,870 CHARIOTS AND AN EQUAL NUMBER OF ELEPHANTS.

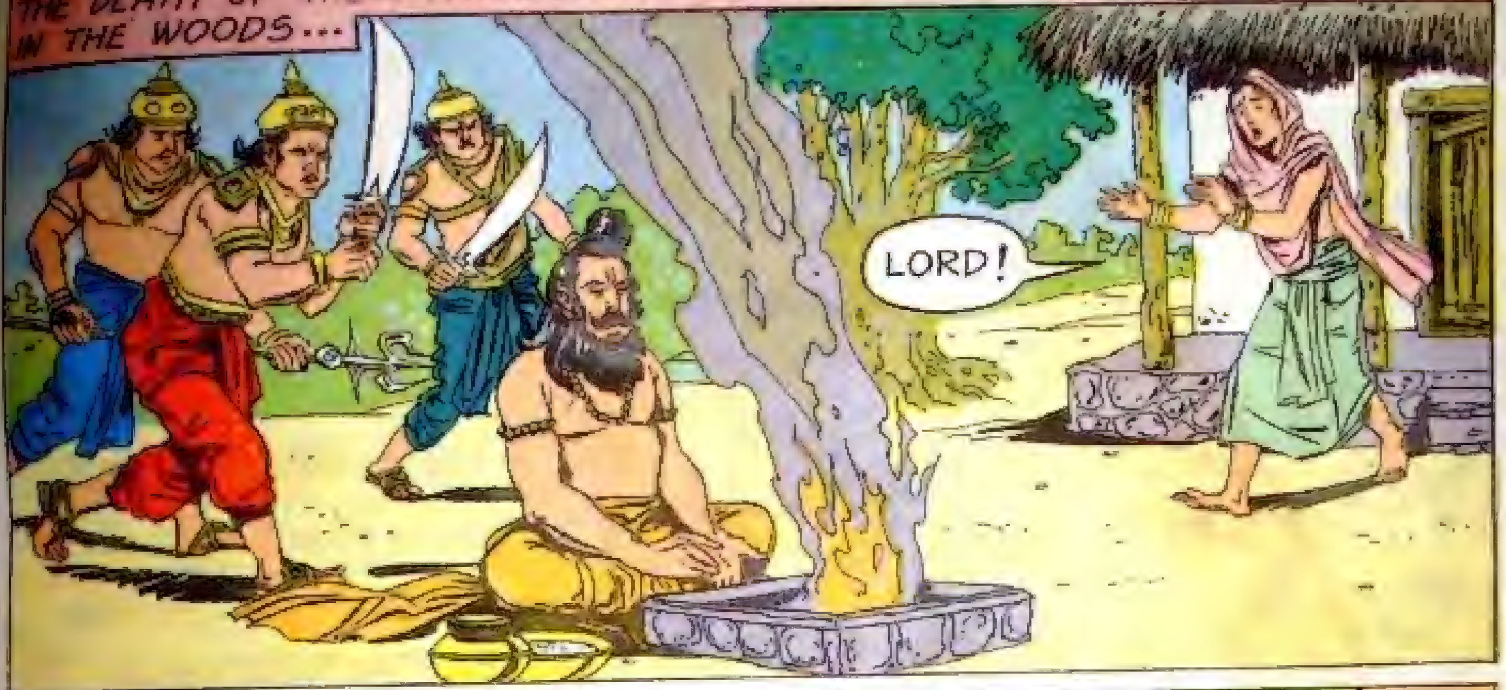

ENRAGED AT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CORE OF HIS ARMY, ARJUNA HIMSELF RUSHED FORWARD. BUT —


AS ARJUNA RUSHED TOWARDS HIM WITH UPROOTED TREES AND ROCKS, PARASHURAMA LOPPED OFF ALL HIS ARMS...

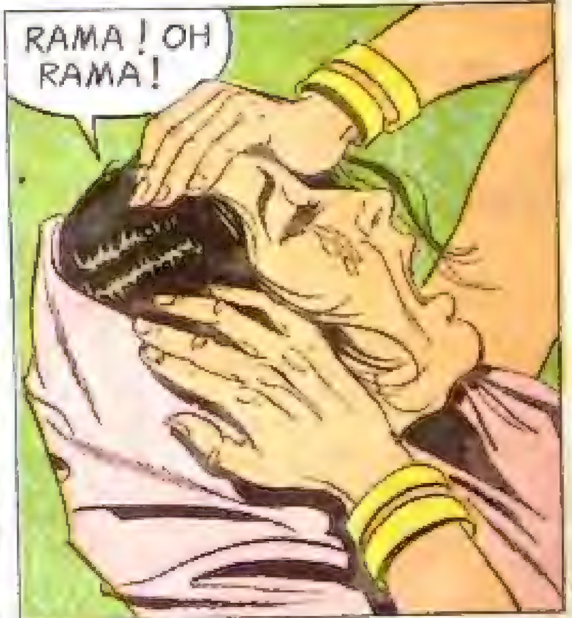

...AND THEN BROUGHT HIS AXE DOWN ON THE TYRANT'S NECK.


PARASHURAMA THEN LED KAMADHENU AND HER CALF TO HIS FATHER.


AND LIFE IN THE HERMITAGE WENT ON AS BEFORE.


BUT NOT FOR LONG. THE SONS OF ARJUNA WERE BENT ON AVENGING THE DEATH OF THEIR FATHER. ONE DAY, WHILE PARASHURAMA WAS AWAY IN THE WOODS...
LORD!


...THEY FELL UPON THE SAGE AND CUT OFF HIS HEAD.
NO! SPARE MY HUSBAND! PLEASE SPARE HIM!


RAMA! OH RAMA!


MEANWHILE, PARASHURAMA WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO THE HERMITAGE. SUDDENLY —
THAT CRY! IT'S MY MOTHER'S. SHE SEEMS TO BE IN DISTRESS. I MUST HASTEN TO HER SIDE.

WHEN PARASHURAMA REACHED THE HERMITAGE, HE WAS AGHAST.

MOTHER! WHO WERE THE FOUL MURDERERS? TELL ME, MOTHER!

RAMA! OH RAMA! RAMA!

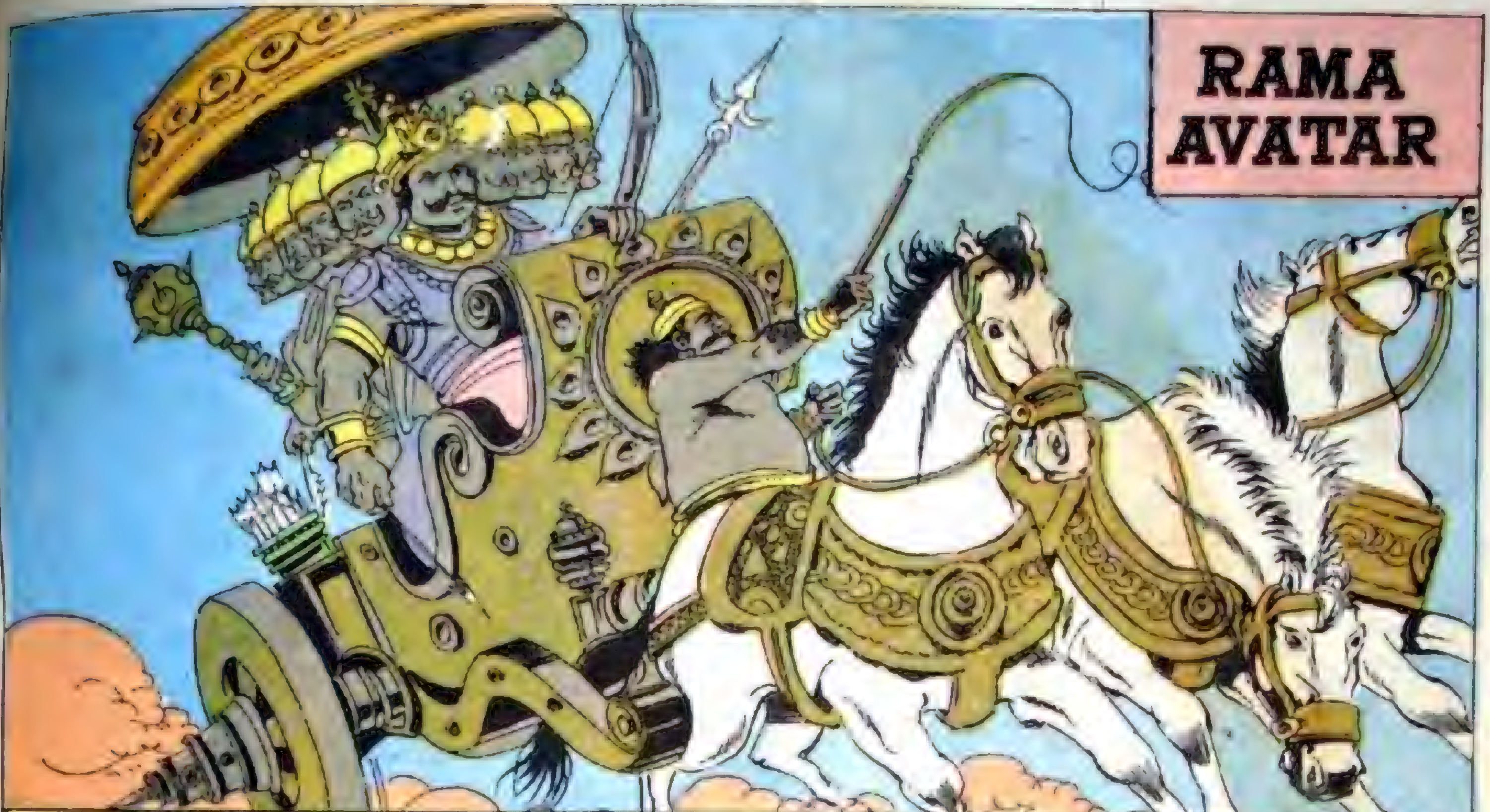
BUT RENUKA'S AGONY WAS SO DEEP THAT SHE COULD ONLY BEAT HER BREAST AND CRY. FULL OF GRIEF AND ANGER, PARASHURAMA MADE A VOW.

TWENTY-ONE TIMES HAVE YOU BEATEN YOUR BREAST, MOTHER. I SHALL WIPE OUT THE VILE RACE OF THE KSHATRIYAS AS MANY TIMES.

AND, GRIPPING HIS AXE, PARASHURAMA SET OUT TO ACCOMPLISH THE REST OF THE TASK FOR WHICH HE HAD COME TO EARTH.



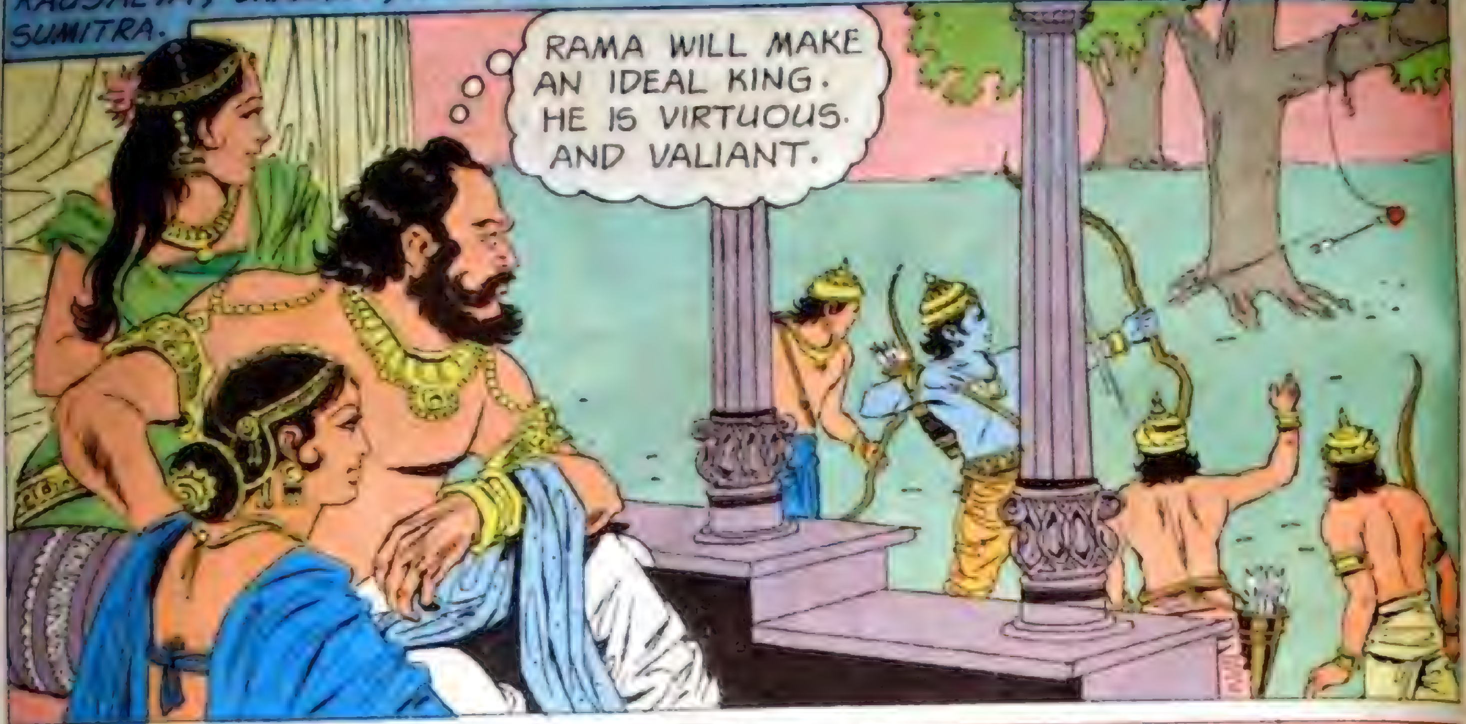
THUS DID LORD VISHNU, AS PARASHURAMA, EXTERMINATE THOSE KSHATRIYAS WHO HAD BECOME A GREAT BURDEN TO BHOOMIDEVI AND HER CHILDREN.

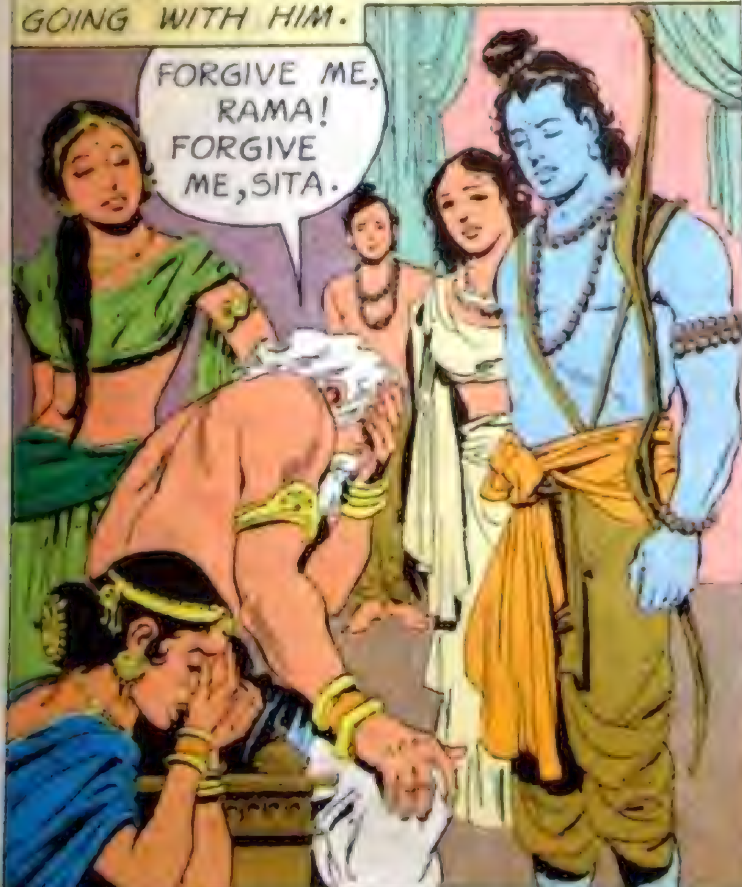


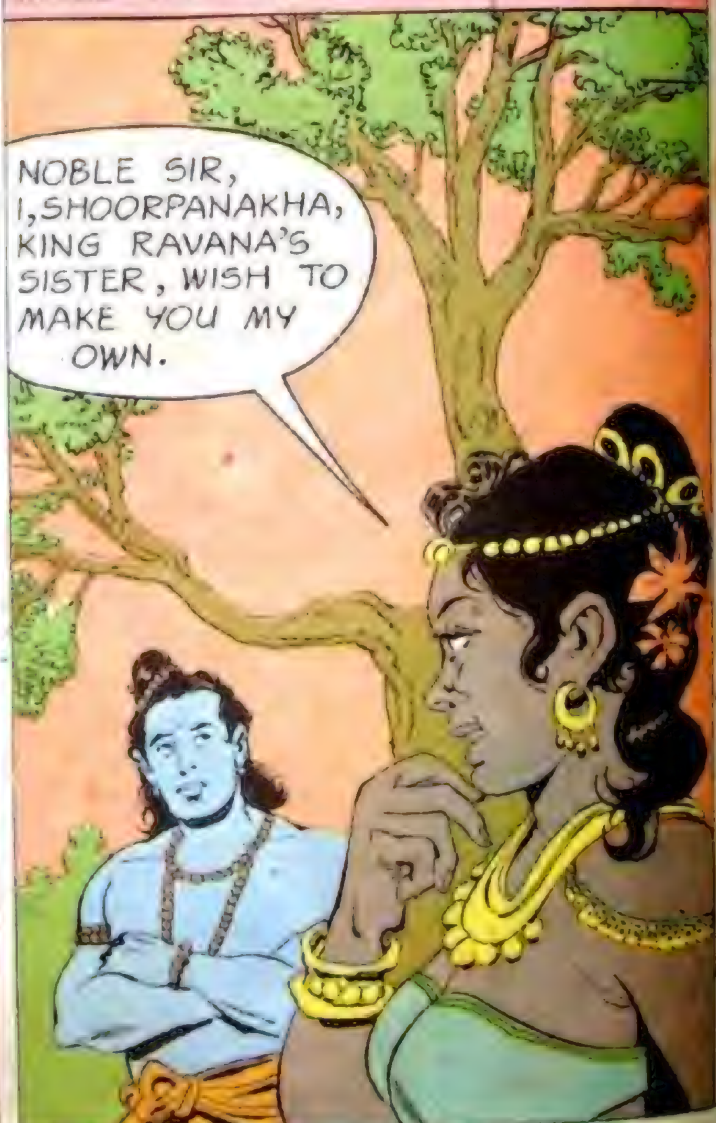




* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO. 67—THE LORD OF LANKA







* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO. 105 — DASHARATHA AND NO. 15 — RAMA.

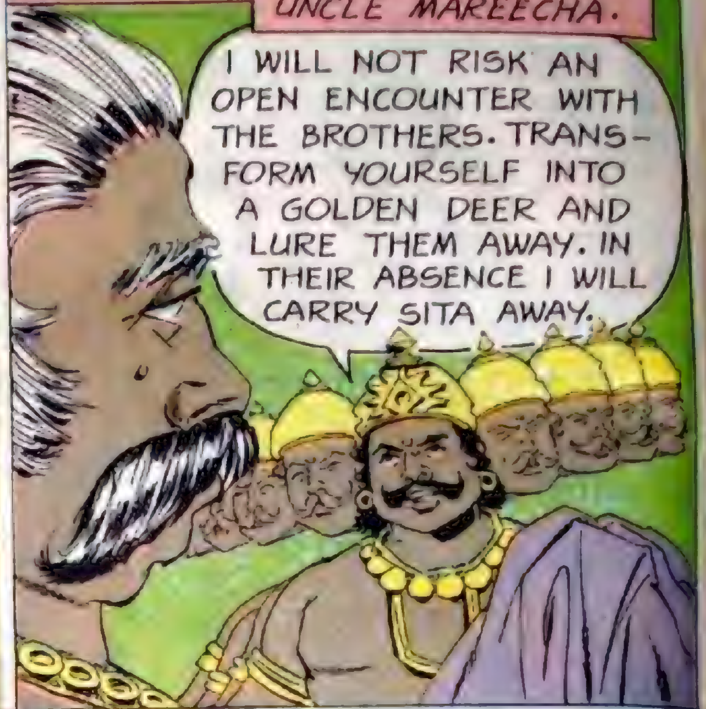

THOUGH AMUSED, RAMA KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE.
BUT I AM NOT FREE. I BELONG TO SITA.


HIS WORDS TRANSFORMED SHOORPANAKHA.


SHE CHARGED MENACINGLY TOWARDS SITA. BUT LAXMANA WAS TOO QUICK FOR HER.


HE SPRANG FORWARD AND HACKED OFF HER NOSE AND EARS.







IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED WHILE RAMA AND LAXMANA WANDERED IN THE FOREST NOT KNOWING WHERE TO LOOK FOR SITA, THEY WON THE AFFECTION OF SUGREEVA,* THE KING OF THE MONKEYS.



*SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO.101—VALI

HANUMAN*, HIS MINISTER, WENT ON THE ERRAND AND CAME BACK WITH THE NEWS THAT SITA WAS AT LANKA.

POOR SITA! LET US MARCH TO THE SEA-SHORE WITH YOUR FORCES, SUGREEVA.

AT THE SEASHORE —





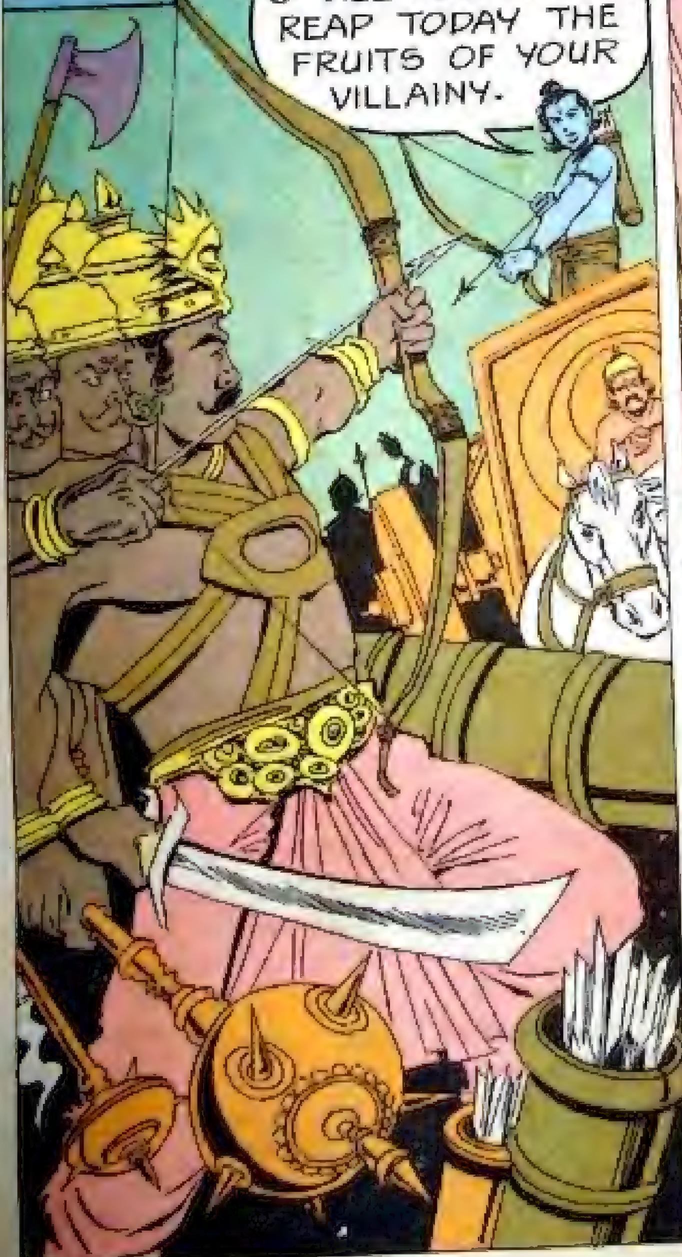
*SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO.19—HANUMAN


...ENHANCE YOUR OWN FAME BY BUILDING A BRIDGE ACROSS ME FOR WHICH POSTERITY WILL SING YOUR GLORY.

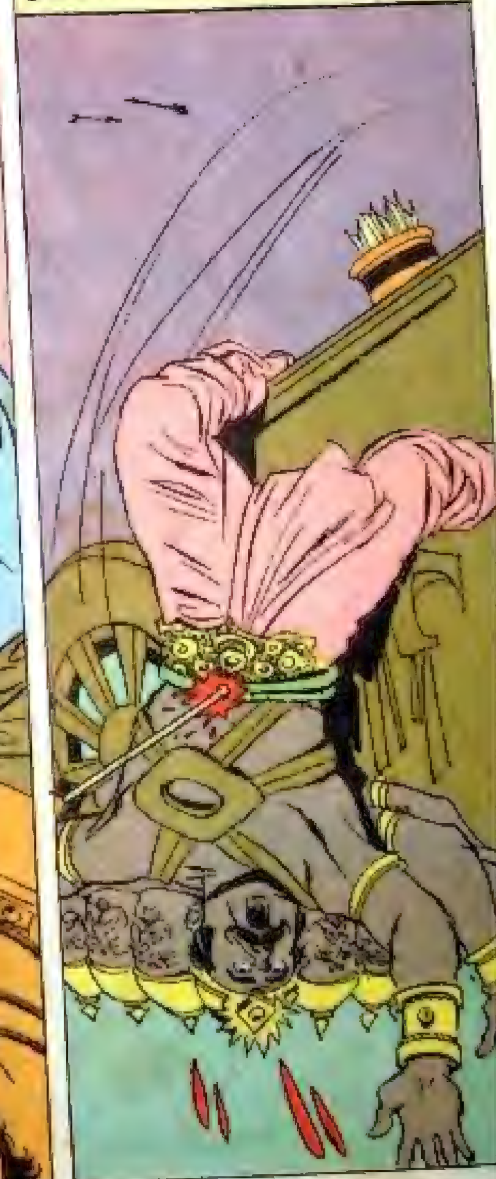

ASSISTED BY THE MONKEYS AND OTHER CREATURES OF THE FOREST, A BRIDGE WAS SOON LAID BY RAMA AND LAXMANA, ACROSS THE SEAS TO THE SHORE OF LANKA.


AS RAVANA SAW THE TWO BROTHERS AND THEIR HORDES APPROACH, HE SENT FOR HIS SON, HIS BROTHER AND HIS FOREMOST WARRIORS.
GO! MEET THE INVADING ARMY AND DEFEAT IT!


BUT RAMA, SUGREEVA, LAXMANA, HANUMAN AND THEIR WILD HORDES EFFORTLESSLY DESTROYED RAVANA'S HUGE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS, CAVALRY, INFANTRY AND CHARIOTS, IN A SINGLE ENCOUNTER!


RAVANA WAS FURIOUS. HE RUSHED TOWARDS RAMA. BUT —
O VILE RAKSHASA, REAP TODAY THE FRUITS OF YOUR VILLAINY.


AND WITH ONE TWANG OF HIS BOW ...


... VISHNU, AS RAMA, COMPLETED THE MISSION FOR WHICH HE HAD TAKEN HIS BIRTH ON EARTH.

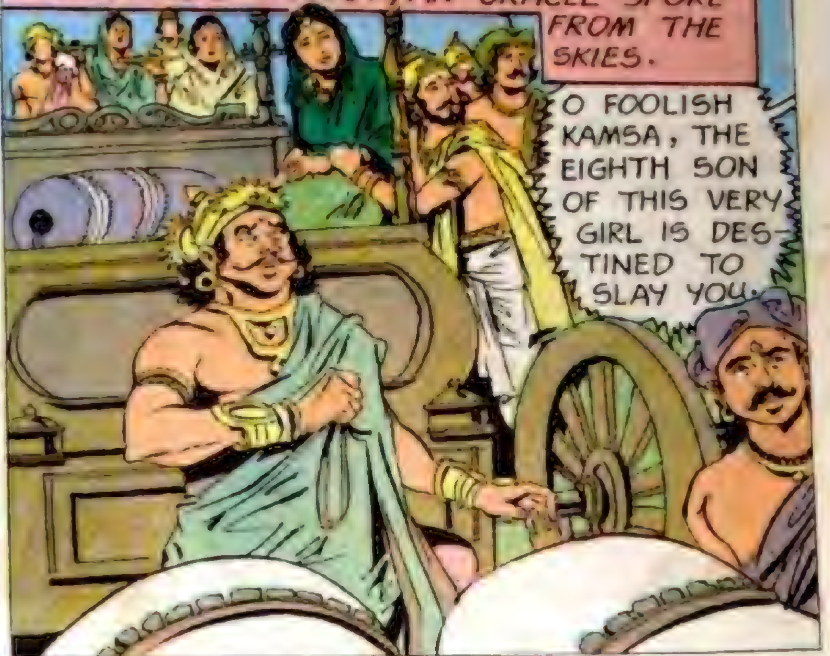






* THE SERPENT ON WHOM VISHNU RESTS.


AT THAT MOMENT, VASUDEVA, A YADAVA NOBLEMAN OF MATHURA, WAS GETTING MARRIED TO DEVAKI, KING UGRASENA'S NIECE.


LATER, WHEN UGRASENA'S SON, KAMSA, AFFECTIONATELY TOOK THE REINS TO DRIVE THE COUPLE'S CHARIOT, AN ORACLE SPOKE FROM THE SKIES.
O FOOLISH KAMSA, THE EIGHTH SON OF THIS VERY GIRL IS DESTINED TO SLAY YOU.


AN ENRAGED KAMSA SEIZED DEVAKI BY THE HAIR AND RAISED HIS SWORD TO BRING IT DOWN ON HER...


...WHEN A HAND STOPPED HIM.


IT BELONGED TO THE GENTLE VASUDEVA.
I PROMISE TO HAND OVER TO YOU EVERY CHILD BORN TO HER. LET HER LIVE.
AND I WILL CLING TO THE HOPE THAT DIVINE INTERVENTION WILL SAVE OUR OFFSPRING WHEN THE TIME COMES.
KAMSA AGREED AND THE PROCESSION MOVED ON.







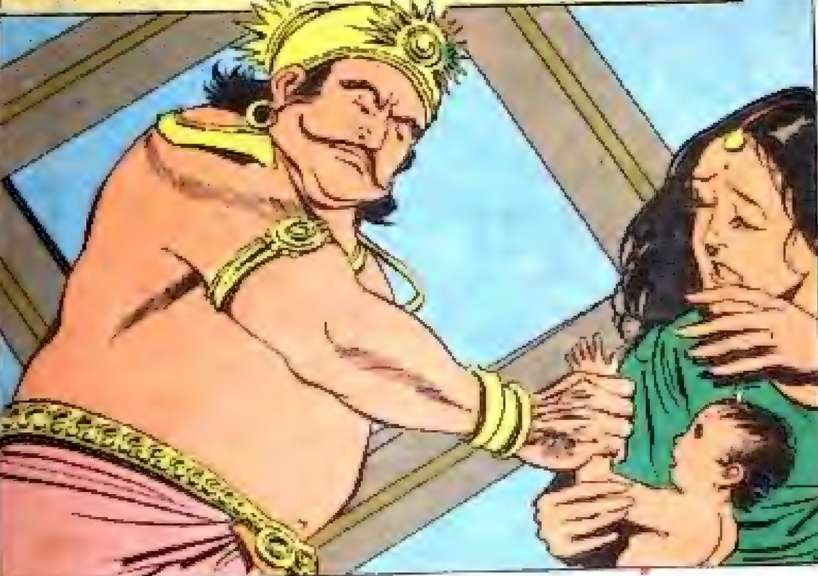


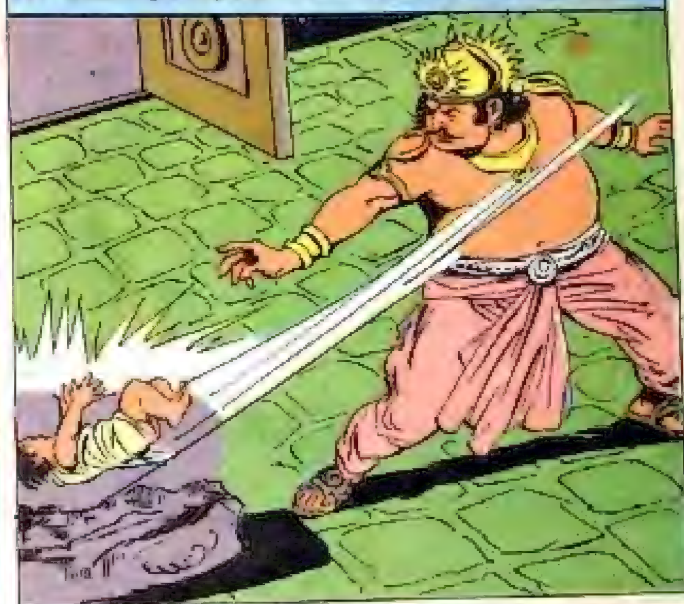


* A COWHERD CHIEF AT GOKUL













* FOR DETAILS READ AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO. 11—KRISHNA.

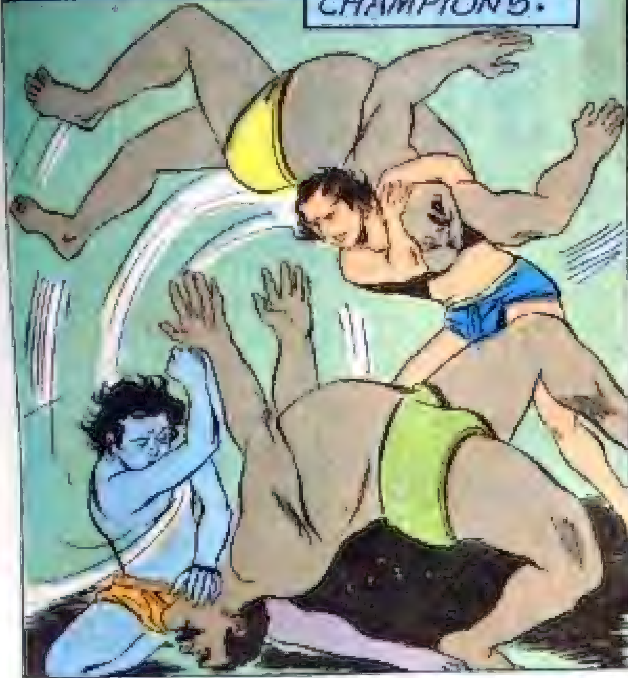

I SHALL HOLD A WRESTLING MATCH AT A BOW FESTIVAL, INVITE BOTH OF THEM TO MATHURA FOR IT AND FINISH THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL.


DELIGHTED BY THE INVITATION, THE BOYS CAME TO MATHURA. AS THEY PASSED THE HALL WHERE THE BOW WAS DISPLAYED—
AH! I MUST BEND IT.

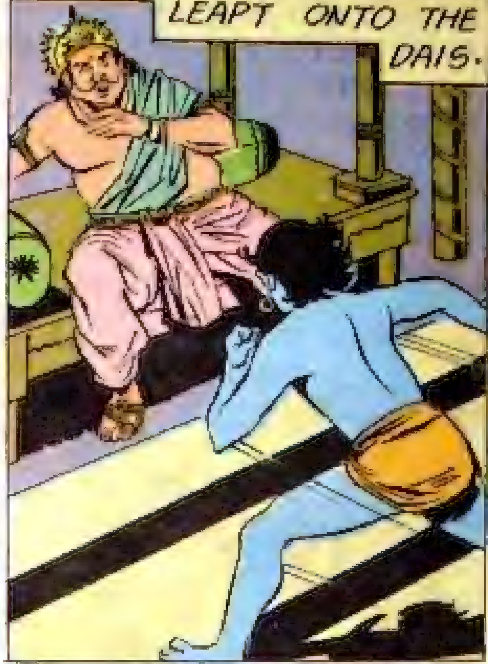

KRISHNA NOT ONLY BENT THE BOW BUT PULLED ITS STRING SO TAUT THAT IT BROKE WITH A RESOUNDING CRASH...


...WHICH REACHED KAMSA'S EARS AS HE RELAXED IN HIS PALACE.
THE SNAP OF A BOW. DREAD FILLS MY BEING. CHANURA AND MUSHTIKA MUST NOT FAIL ME.


THE DAY OF THE FESTIVAL DAWNED. THE TRUMPET GAVE THE SIGNAL FOR THE GAMES TO BEGIN. THE MIGHTY WRESTLER CHANURA TOOK ON KRISHNA, AND HIS PARTNER, MUSHTIKA, BALARAMA.









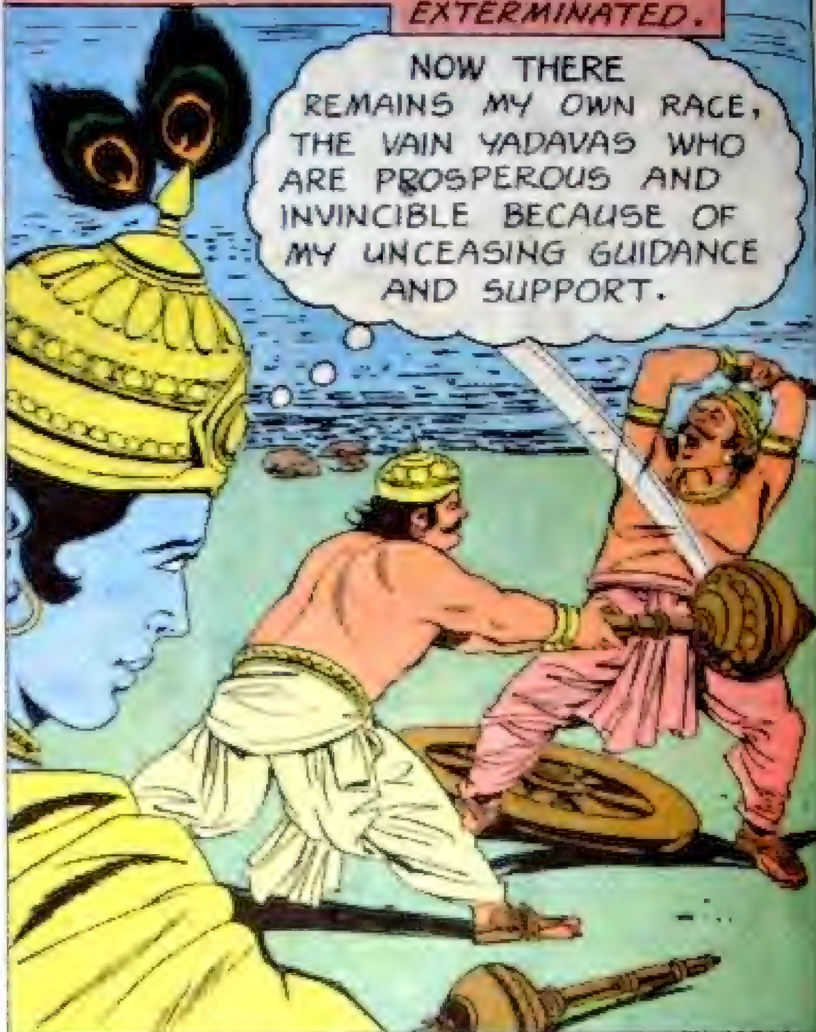






* AWAIT OUR AMAR CHITRA KATHA — KRISHNA AND JARASANDHA


SOON AFTER THAT, KRISHNA'S COUSINS, THE VIRTUOUS PANDAVAS, WERE UNLAWFULLY DEPRIVED OF THEIR KINGDOM BY THEIR COUSINS, THE ARROGANT KAURAVAS, AND WAR BROKE OUT BETWEEN THEM.
I WILL SOON BE ABLE TO RID BHOOMI DEVI OF THE KAURAVAS.


IN THAT WAR THE KAURAVAS WERE EXTERMINATED.
NOW THERE REMAINS MY OWN RACE, THE VAIN YADAVAS WHO ARE PROSPEROUS AND INVINCIBLE BECAUSE OF MY UNCEASING GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT.


BACK AT DWARAKA —


I SHALL CAUSE THE ARROGANT YADAVA YOUTHS TO TEASE THE RISHIS AND INVITE THEIR OWN DESTRUCTION. THEN BALARAMA AND I WILL BE FREE TO WITHDRAW OURSELVES FROM THE WORLD.

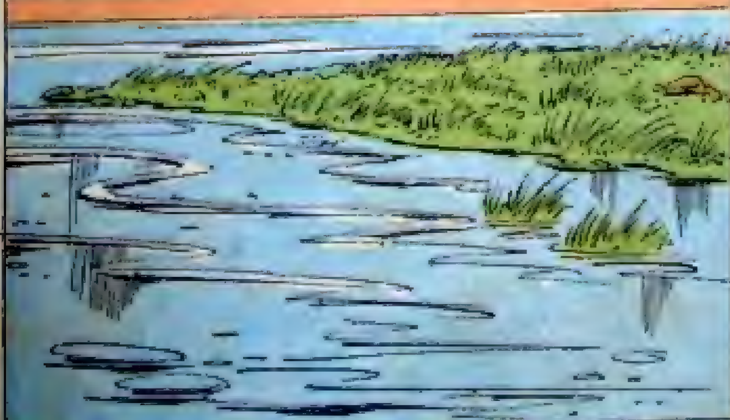

AT THAT TIME, THE RISHIS—NARADA, VISHWAMITRA, KANVA, DURVASA, VASISHTHA AND OTHERS—WERE LIVING NEAR DWARAKA.
LET US DRESS SAMBA AS A PREGNANT GIRL AND REQUEST THE RISHIS TO PREDICT THE SEX OF THE EXPECTED CHILD.
AN EXCELLENT IDEA!

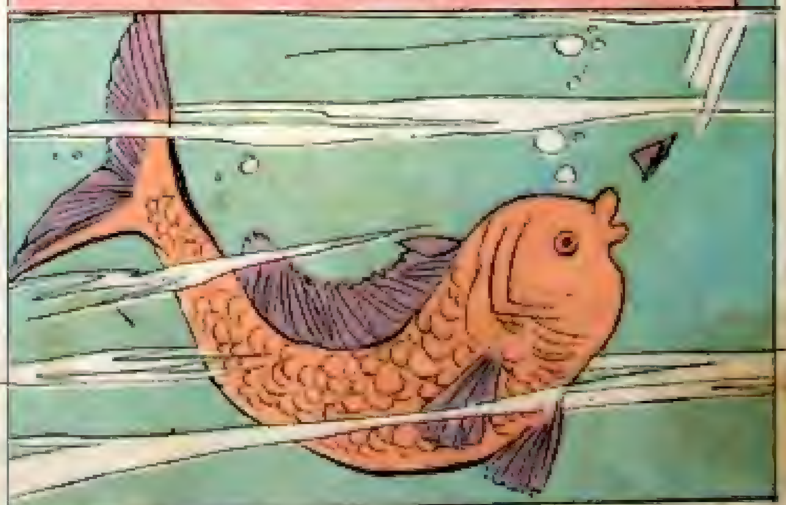

WHEN THEY PUT THEIR QUERY TO THE ALL-KNOWING RISHIS, HOWEVER—
HOW DARE THE PRANKSTERS TRIFLE WITH US?
SHE IS BEARING A MACE WHICH WILL DESTROY YOUR RACE, IGNORANT FOOLS!


THE TERRIFIED YOUTHS SEARCHED SAMBA.
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH IT?
LET US TAKE IT TO UGRASENA AND CONFESS OUR CRIME.

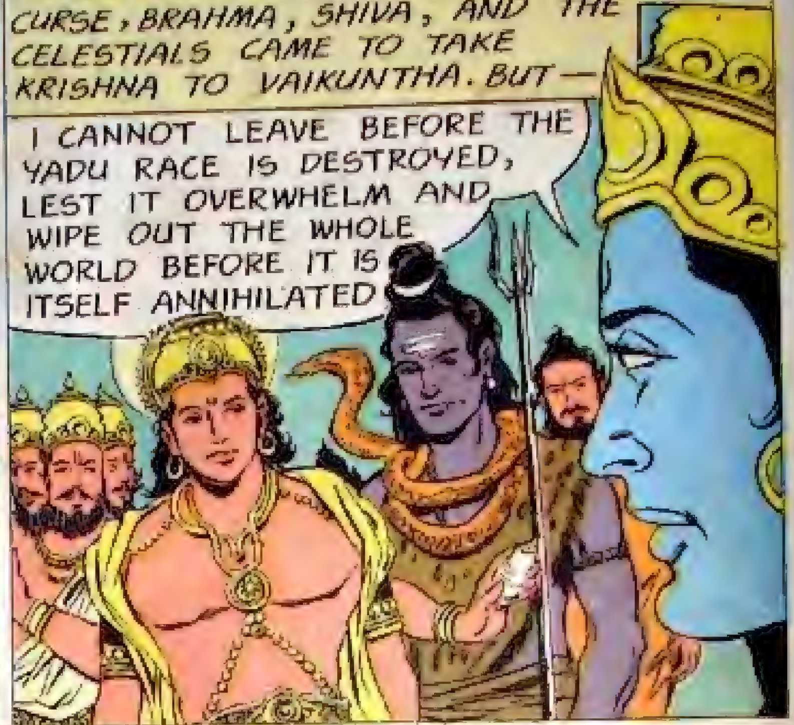

WHEN UGRASENA HEARD THEIR STORY—
DON'T BE ALARMED. GRIND THE MACE INTO FINE POWDER AND SCATTER THE POWDER IN THE OCEAN.


THE ORDER WAS CARRIED OUT.
THIS PIECE IS TOO HARD. TRY AS I MIGHT I COULD NOT POUND IT.
THEN THROW IT IN AS IT IS.


BUT THE POWDER WAS WASHED BACK TO THE SHORE WHERE IT GREW INTO A GRASS CALLED ERAKA.

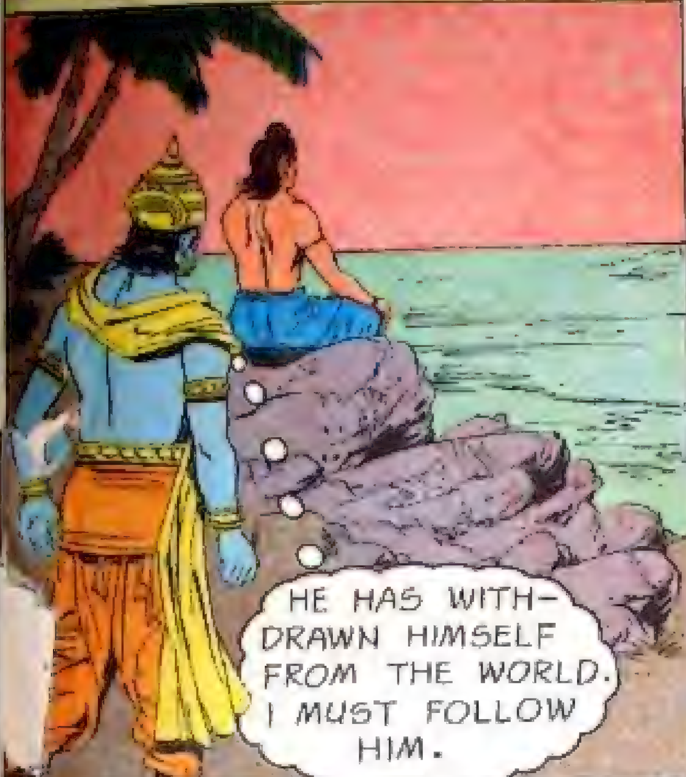

AND THE PIECE THAT COULD NOT BE GROUND WAS SWALLOWED BY A FISH.


THE FISH WAS CAUGHT BY THE HUNTER, JARA. WHEN HE CUT IT OPEN —
WHAT'S THIS? A PIECE OF IRON! IT WILL MAKE A FINE HEAD FOR ONE OF MY ARROWS.


MEANWHILE, SINCE THE YADU RACE WAS AS GOOD AS DESTROYED BY THE RISHI'S CURSE, BRAHMA, SHIVA, AND THE CELESTIALS CAME TO TAKE KRISHNA TO VAIKUNTHA. BUT —
I CANNOT LEAVE BEFORE THE YADU RACE IS DESTROYED, LEST IT OVERWHELM AND WIPE OUT THE WHOLE WORLD BEFORE IT IS ITSELF ANNIHILATED.


SOON AFTER, DWARAKA WAS PLAGUED BY FRIGHTENING OMENS. THE YADAVAS IN THEIR ALARM DRANK TOO MUCH LIQUOR, WERE INTOXICATED AND QUARRELLED AMONGST THEMSELVES.
ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM NOW, DWARAKA WILL GO UNDER THE SEA. THE WORLD WILL BE INVADED BY THE SPIRIT OF KALI.


THE YADAVAS CONTINUED QUARRELLING. THEIR WEAPONS EXHAUSTED, THEY PULLED OUT HANDFULS OF THE DEADLY ERAKA GRASS.
LO! THE GRASS HAS TURNED INTO A MACE!
MY WORK IS DONE. THEY WILL SOON ANNIHILATE THEMSELVES.


HE WENT TO LOOK FOR BALARAMA AND FOUND HIM ALREADY SEATED IN MEDITATION BY THE SEASHORE.
HE HAS WITHDRAWN HIMSELF FROM THE WORLD. I MUST FOLLOW HIM.


KRISHNA SAT UNDER A PEEPUL TREE AND LEANED BACK AGAINST IT.


JARA, THE HUNTER, WHO WAS PASSING BY, MISTOOK HIS FOOT TO BE THE MOUTH OF A DEER AND TOOK AIM.
THIS ARROW CANNOT FAIL ME. IT'S THE ONE I MADE WITH THE PIECE OF IRON THAT WAS STUCK IN THE FISH'S MAW.


THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK AND BROUGHT TO AN END THE MOST GLORIOUS AVATAR OF LORD VISHNU.


THE HEAVENS RAINED FLOWERS AND CELESTIAL MUSIC FILLED THE SKY AS VISHNU PASSED ON FROM EARTH TO HIS ABODE IN VAIKUNTHA.

BUDDHA AVATAR

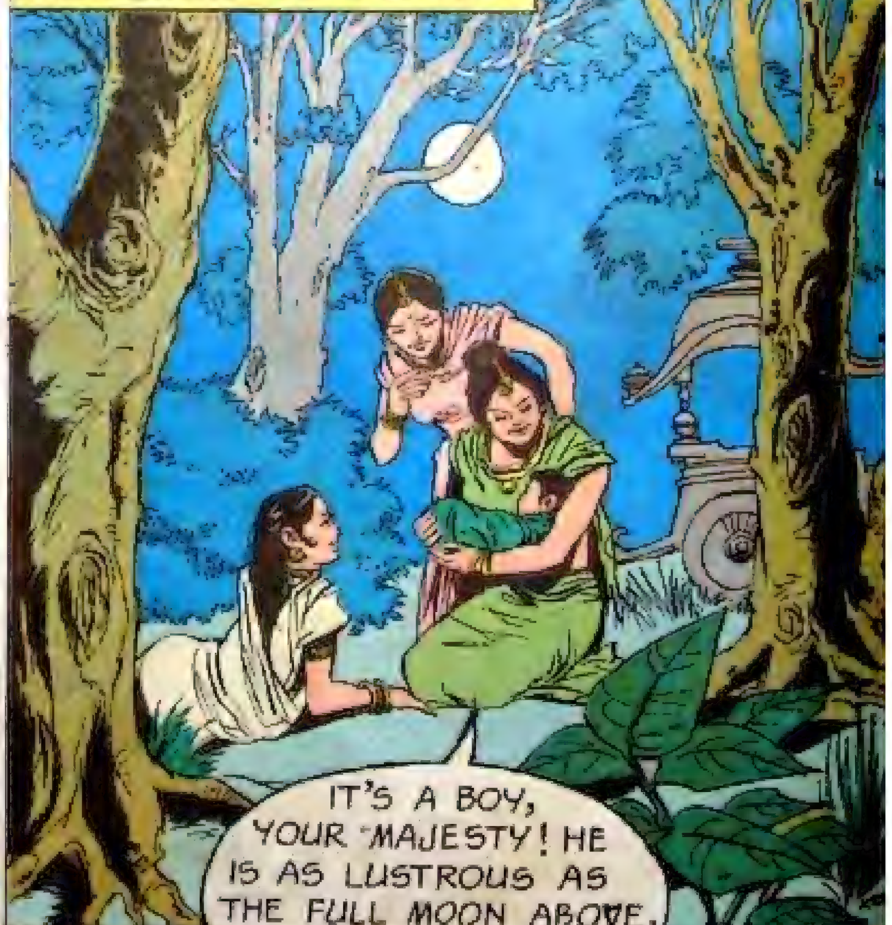


WITH KRISHNA'S DEPARTURE FROM EARTH, THE AGE OF KALI SET IN. HINDUISM LOST MUCH OF ITS PURITY. THE AUTHORITY OF THE VEDAS BECAME QUESTIONABLE. EMPTY RITUALS REPLACED TRUE DEVOTION TO GOD AND POWER-DRUNK BRAHMAN PRIESTS EXPLOITED AND OPPRESSED THE OTHER CASTES.

MAYADEVI, THE QUEEN OF THE SAKYA KING, SHUDDHODANA OF KAPILAVASTU, HAD A STRANGE DREAM. A WHITE ELEPHANT WITH SIX TUSKS PIERCED HER WOMB.



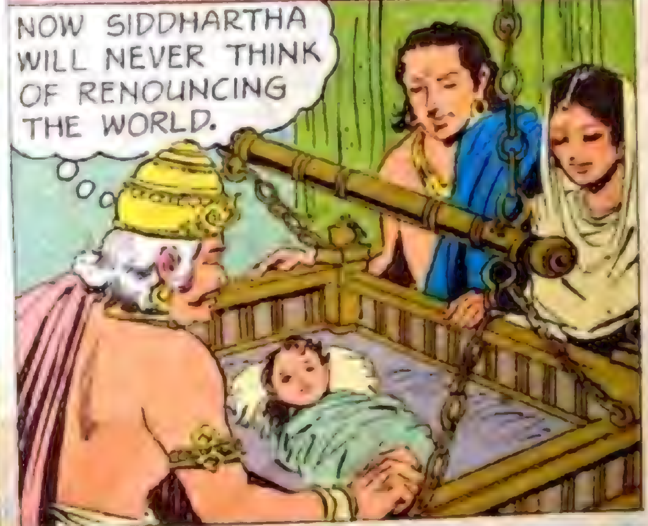
A FEW MONTHS LATER, SHE WAS PASSING THROUGH THE LUMBINI GARDENS ON HER WAY TO HER PARENTAL HOME. AS SHE RESTED BENEATH A SAL TREE, SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A CHILD.



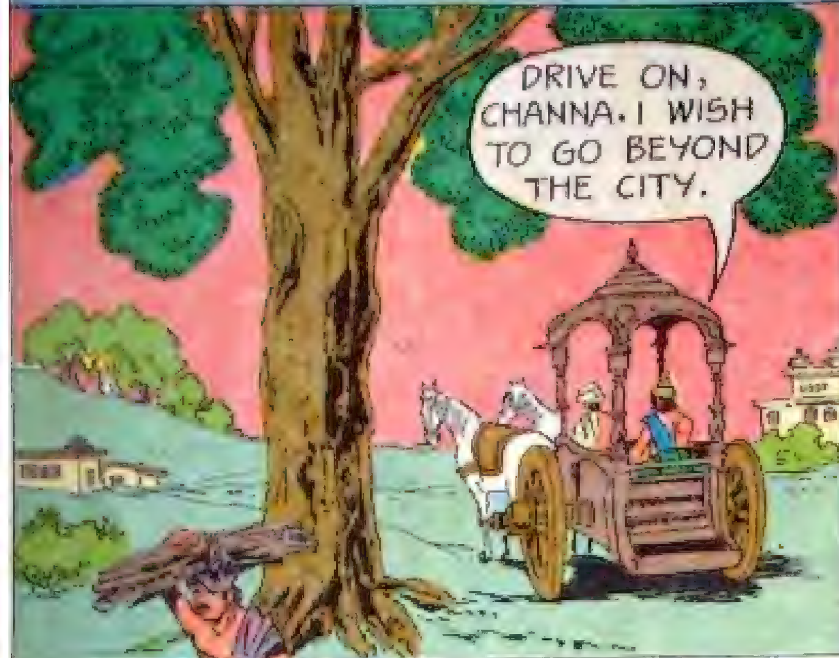

LATER, AT THE PALACE, SAGE ASITA CAME TO SEE THE INFANT.
THIS CHILD WILL EITHER BECOME A GREAT EMPEROR OR WILL RENOUNCE THE WORLD AND BECOME A GREAT SAGE.
IF I CAN HELP IT, HE SHALL BECOME A KING OF KINGS AND NOT A SAGE.


WHEN SIDDHARTHA, AS THE CHILD WAS NAMED, GREW INTO A YOUNG LAD —
THE PRINCE SHALL NOT STEP BEYOND THE CONFINES OF HIS PALACE. LET HIM NEVER KNOW OF THE MISERIES OF OLD AGE, DISEASE OR DEATH. PROVIDE HIM WITH ALL THE LUXURIES IMAGINABLE.


AS SOON AS SIDDHARTHA, THE PRINCE WHO WAS IGNORANT OF THE PAIN AND MISERY OF THIS WORLD, CAME OF AGE, HE WAS MARRIED TO YASHODHARA, THE DAUGHTER OF A SAKYA NOBLE.

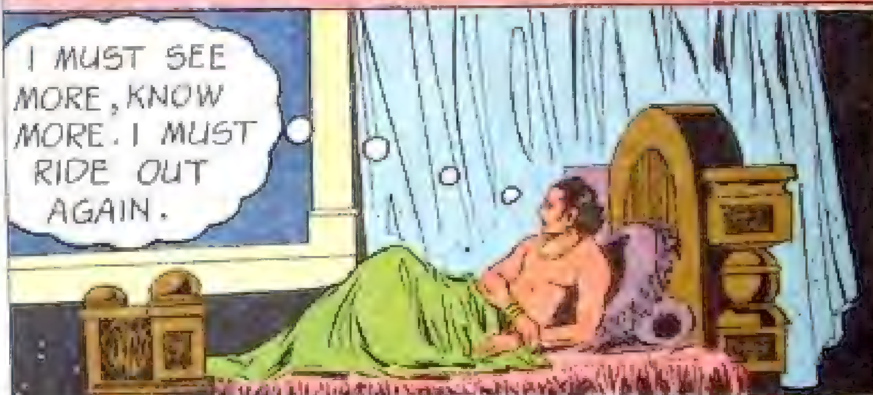

IN DUE COURSE, A SON WAS BORN TO THEM AND SIDDHARTHA HAD ALL THAT A MAN COULD WANT.
NOW SIDDHARTHA WILL NEVER THINK OF RENOUNCING THE WORLD.


BUT ONE DAY, A STRANGE URGE CAME OVER SIDDHARTHA. HE WENT TO SHUDDHODANA.
FATHER, I MUST GO OUT OF THE PALACE AND SEE MORE OF THE WORLD.
THEN I SHALL ORDER A SPECIAL CHARIOT FOR YOU. YOU MAY GO WHEN IT IS READY.
MEANWHILE, I SHALL SEE THAT THE ROUTE HE TAKES IS CLEAR OF ALL DISTURBING SIGHTS.


A FEW DAYS LATER, SIDDHARTHA RODE OUT IN A CHARIOT DRIVEN BY CHANNA. WHEN THEY REACHED THE CITY LIMITS —
DRIVE ON, CHANNA. I WISH TO GO BEYOND THE CITY.


AS THEY DROVE FURTHER —
CHANNA! HALT! WHY DOES THAT MAN BEND SO? WHY DOES HE USE A STICK?
IT IS OLD AGE, MY PRINCE. EVERY-ONE HAS TO GROW OLD.


EVEN I, CHANNA?
EVEN YOU, MY LORD.

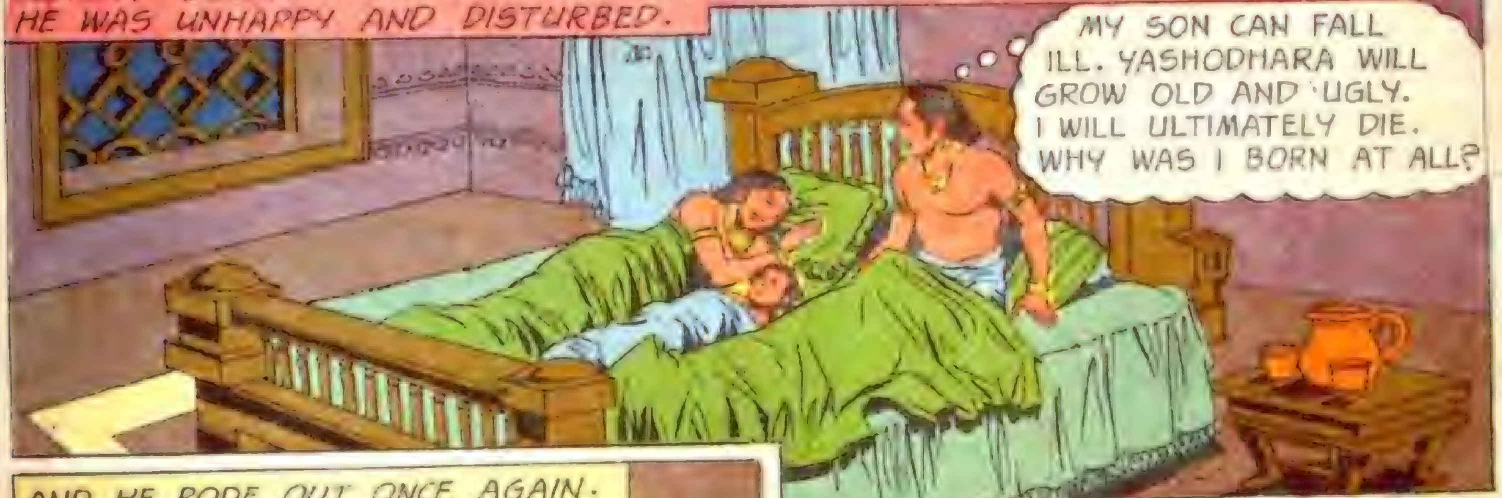

WHEN THEY RETURNED TO THE PALACE, THE PRINCE BROODED OVER WHAT HE HAD SEEN.
I MUST SEE MORE, KNOW MORE. I MUST RIDE OUT AGAIN.

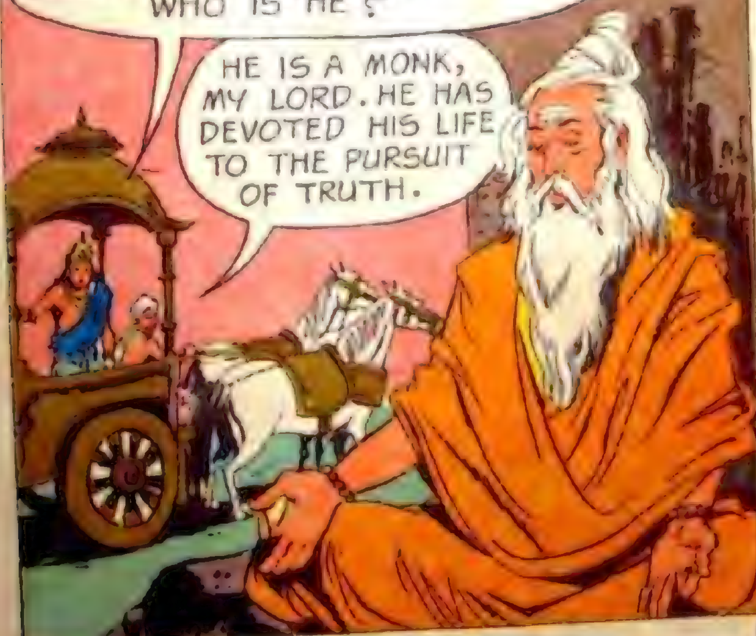

THIS TIME THEY SAW A SICK MAN, GROANING WITH PAIN.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM, CHANNA?
HE IS ILL, MY LORD, WITH A PAINFUL 'SEASE.

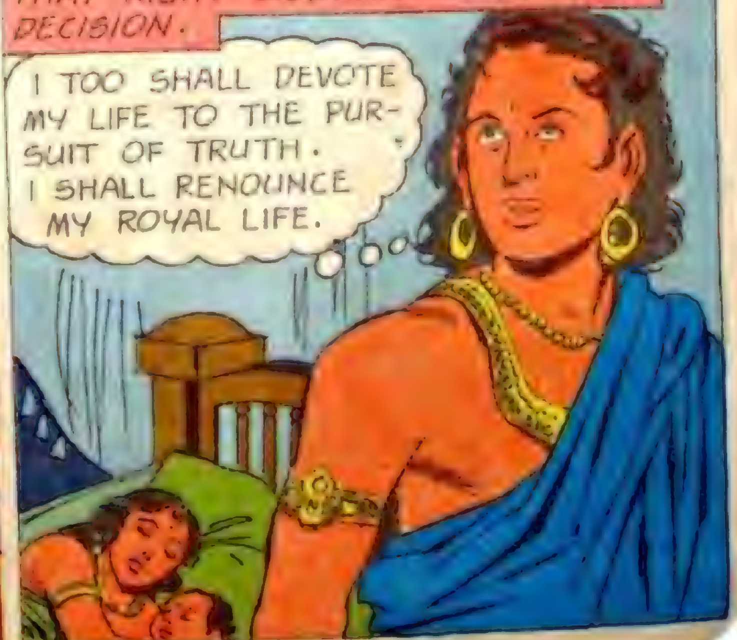

IS DISEASE PECULIAR TO HIM, CHANNA?
NO, MY LORD. EVEN YOU MAY FALL ILL.


SIDDHARTHA'S GREED FOR MORE KNOWLEDGE ON WHAT HAD HITHERTO BEEN CONCEALED FROM HIM GREW. HE MADE ANOTHER TOUR.
CHANNA! WHY ARE THEY CARRYING THAT MAN? IS HE OLD? IS HE ILL?
NO, MY LORD. IT'S MUCH WORSE. HE IS DEAD.


WILL I TOO HAVE TO DIE, CHANNA?
YES, MY LORD. ALL THAT IS BORN MUST DIE.


AS SIDDHARTHA PONDERED ON WHAT HE HAD SEEN, HIS LIFE OF EASE AND LUXURY BEGAN TO PALL ON HIM. HE NO LONGER FOUND JOY IN ANYTHING. HE WAS UNHAPPY AND DISTURBED.
MY SON CAN FALL ILL. YASHODHARA WILL GROW OLD AND UGLY. I WILL ULTIMATELY DIE. WHY WAS I BORN AT ALL?


AND HE RODE OUT ONCE AGAIN.
STOP, CHANNA! THAT FACE! HOW CALM! HOW SERENE IT LOOKS! WHO IS HE?
HE IS A MONK, MY LORD. HE HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH.


THAT NIGHT SIDDHARTHA MADE A DECISION.
I TOO SHALL DEVOTE MY LIFE TO THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH. I SHALL RENOUNCE MY ROYAL LIFE.

SO SIDDHARTHA LEFT THE PALACE AND BECAME AN ASCETIC. AFTER YEARS OF BITTER STRUGGLES, HE PERCEIVED TRUTH, AS HE SAT MEDITATING UNDER A BODHI TREE.



AND SIDDHARTHA, THE PRINCE, BECAME BUDDHA* — THE ENLIGHTENED ONE.



THEN BUDDHA CAME BACK TO LIVE AMONGST MEN AND TEACH THEM WHAT HE HAD LEARNT. HE HELD HIS FIRST SERMON IN THE DEER PARK AT SARNATH, NEAR VARANASI.



FOR MANY YEARS DID BUDDHA PREACH, AND MANY WERE THOSE WHO SOUGHT REFUGE IN HIM AND IN HIS TEACHINGS. WHAT HE COULD GIVE, HOWEVER, TOUCHED BUT A DROP OF WATER IN THE SEA OF HUMANITY THAT WAS TOSSED BY THE MISERIES FORETOLD FOR THE KALI YUGA.

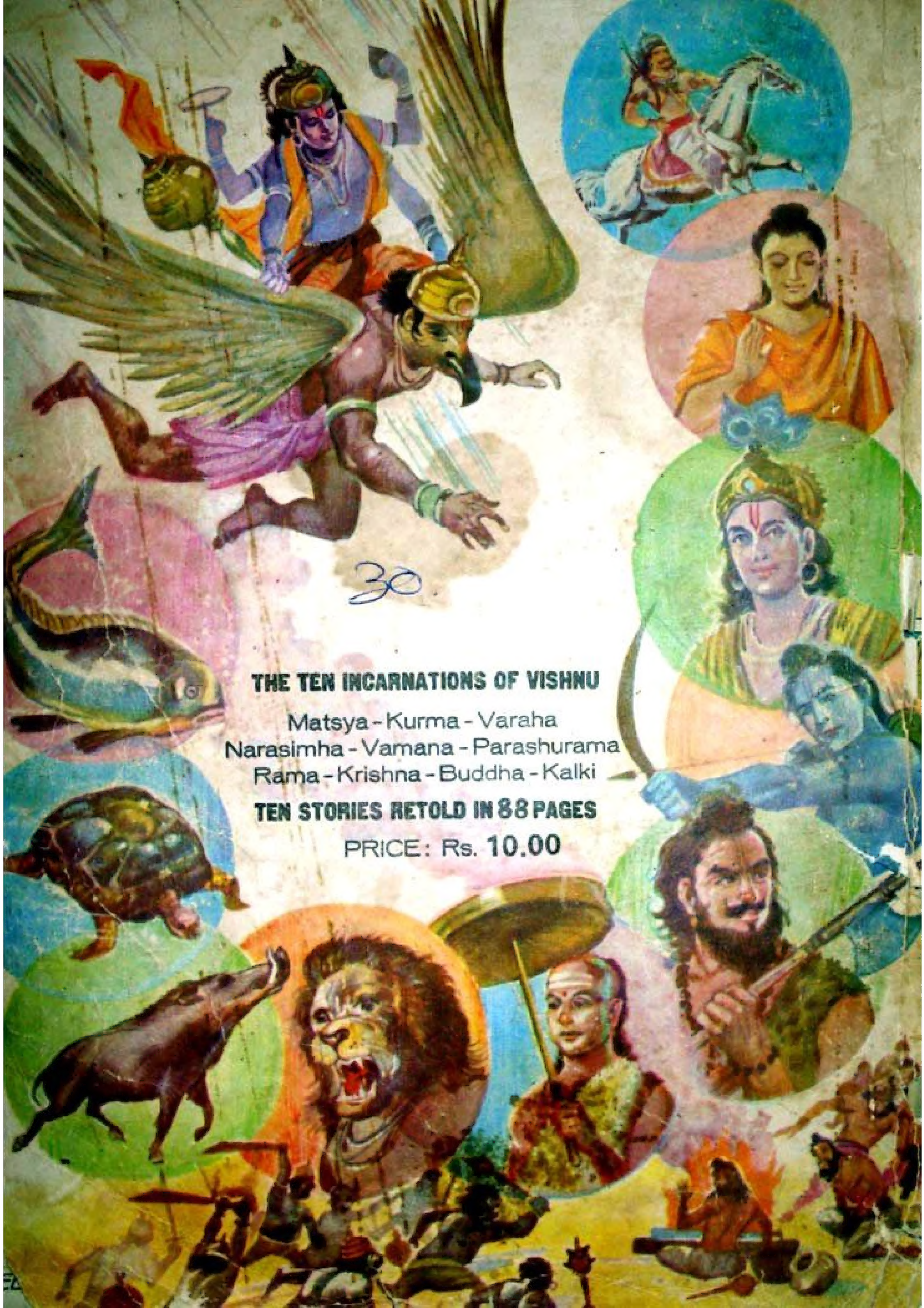
* SEE AMAR CHITRA KATHA NO.22 - BUDDHA.



MANY GOOD MEN WALKED THE EARTH AFTER BUDDHA BUT INSIGNIFICANT WAS THE EFFECT THEY HAD AGAINST THE GROWING SUPREMACY OF EVIL AND EVIL ONES ON EARTH. WITH THE ADVANCE OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE THE LONGEVITY OF MAN HAS INCREASED BUT WITH THE ADVANCE IN TECHNOLOGY, MAN'S LIFE HAS BECOME A NIGHTMARE OF HYPERTENSIONS AND POLLUTION. BUT NOT ALL HOPE IS LOST.



"FOR WHEN THE AGE REACHES ITS NADIR AND ITS WORST FORCES HAVE WELL NIGH SPENT THEMSHLVES, VISHNU WILL APPEAR AMONGST MORTALS IN HIS SATTVIC FORM AS KALKI.RIDING HIS CELESTIAL HORSE, HE WILL EXTERMINATE, BY THE MILLIONS, CORRUPT ROBBERS WHO BEAR HIGH POSITIONS IN LIFE AND WILL REINFORCE MORAL SENSE AND HUMANITARIAN VIEWS IN ALL GOOD PEOPLE, TILL TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE WILL AGAIN ENJOY PEACE AND SECURITY. THEN WILL BEGIN A NEW CYCLE OF YUGAS WITH SATYA (TRUTH) AT ITS HEAD, WHOSE HUMAN GENERATIONS WILL BE IMBUED WITH GREAT MORAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND PHYSICAL STRENGTH, POSSESSING ALL IMMACULATE ATTRIBUTES."



30
THE TEN INCARNATIONS OF VISHNU
Matsya - Kurma - Varaha
Narasimha - Vamana - Parashurama
Rama - Krishna - Buddha - Kalki
TEN STORIES RETOLD IN 88 PAGES
PRICE: Rs. 10.00